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1841

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A NAVAL IMPRESSION OF THE WAR

By
VICE-ADMIRAL C. V. USBORNE,
C.B., C.M.G.

WITH TWO MAPS

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Ι. ΜΕΓΑΣ

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TO MY DAUGHTER
VIVIAN MARY

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INTRODUCTION

IN this non-technical narrative I write of things that I know, and describe the War as I saw it. Insignificant though my own part, it was played with a varied backcloth, and great events were continually shaping within my purview.

By recording my own experiences, and the thoughts they engendered, I endeavour to supply one more contemporary picture of an epoch humanity may want to remember. Already its details are fading from men's minds. Soon, but not, I hope, too soon, all those who fought in it will be dead. Then the historian will come into his own. Supporting himself on documents, he will hazard this theory or that. History will deliver its long waited "verdict". It will decide who started the War, whether we ought to have taken Constantinople, who won the Battle of Jutland, and a number of other contentious matters. Let us hope that no new Armageddon will have obtruded itself to distract men's interest from those events which, to us who lived through them, seem so tremendously important.

Should the historian deign to turn these pages, he will at least find some genuine reflections, and a record which, whatever its shortcomings, has the merit of truth.

The lay reader may perchance find some interest in a humanistic account of naval life and naval events written with inside knowledge.

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If I have laid stress on the pleasurable variety of our lives in those distant days, it is not that I ignore the self-sacrifice and gallantry of our soldiers and sailors, nor yet the pitiless horror and drab waste of the whole fell business. These aspects are already well documented.

If I seem to have criticised the Admiralty or our Allies, mine is gentle criticism, for no one can realize more fully than I that in this war, though all made mistakes, they made them in good faith, and never before did individuals or nations spend themselves so generously and so completely in a common cause.

C. V. USBORNE

Chapter One

GUNNERY, GUNNERY, GUNNERY

LOOKING back on those famous days, I see them as one long continuum of strenuous endeavour. The days, I mean, in which the Navy developed from a painted inefficiency into a fighting force; a force which justified itself by smothering a hardly-visible High Seas Fleet, at a distance of five miles, with a fire so telling that the enemy hurriedly turned away and disappeared into the murk.

The Navy owes an immense debt to Admiral Sir Percy Scott. It was he who first taught it to shoot, who forced upon it the telescopic sight, and insisted that holes in the target were the only criterion of efficiency.

How we sweated, we gunnery lieutenants, with our dotters and our deflection-teachers, both invented by Scott—devices for developing in the seaman gunlayer the peculiar faculty of pressing his trigger with his sights on the target.

There was no rest! Ships' routines were altered so that every gunlayer should be exercised at least once and perhaps twice a day. The moment breakfast was over, in the time hitherto by immemorial custom devoted to giving the ship a final polish up before Divisions, the gunlayers would muster at the dotter, and the guns' crews, one after the other, would do their daily practice at the loader. But

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that was by no means the end of it. All day long, if the anchorage allowed—and it generally did—a little target would be towing up and down to seaward, and firing with rifles, fixed inside the bores of the big guns, would be continuous until darkness put a stop to it.

It was Scott, too, who devised the Loader, a kind of dummy gun for teaching the crews quick loading. It enabled loading to be practised over and over again without unloading the gun after each round.

The real inwardness of Scott's teaching lay in his insistence that the sights must be kept constantly aligned on the target, no matter how much the ship might roll, so that the instant the gun was loaded the trigger might be pressed and the shot dispatched. This was revolutionary, for hitherto it had been thought sufficient to bring the sights on when the gun was reported 'ready.' It entailed moving the gun constantly up and down to counteract the roll, and required an immense amount of practice. Of its effectiveness the increased rate of hitting soon gave proof. Gunlayers became a race apart, to be kept in cotton wool, and trained and trained within an inch of their lives.

When the time came round for the annual gunlayers' test the tension was acute. The ship would steam past the target at a fixed range for each gun in turn, each gun's crew being allowed to fire as hard as it could for a space of one to two-and-a-half minutes, according to its size and rate of loading.

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Scores of lieutenants, captains, and even admirals were stationed all over the place to mark and to umpire, and heaven help the unfortunate gunnery lieutenant whose guns' crews failed to make good!

Percy Scott was apt at phrases, and when, as Captain of the Gunnery School *Excellent*, he discovered a seaman named Stone who had shown that he could shoot, he did not let the opportunity slip. He assembled the ship's company, and, standing this man out in front of all, referred to him as the 'Pebble', but added, "He is not the only pebble on the beach."

He was not. Pebbles of flawless quality were discovered all over the Navy. But alas for the pebble who failed in the hour of trial, who, in fact, fozzled his gunlayer's test; for him there was no mercy, his name became 'mud' for ever. He would be disrated from gunlayer, and at the first convenient opportunity his ship would find some excuse for discarding him and passing him on elsewhere.

It was not so much the anticipation of war but the competitive spirit and the quest for promotion which drove the Navy with a sharp spur to unexampled standards of endeavour, and it was fortunate that some cool brains at the head of affairs were really thinking of war, or we should have made more mistakes than we did! We made quite enough as it was.

From a mass of such experiences, I recall one particular gunlayers' test for light guns, at which all records were broken. It was that of the battle-

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ship *King Edward VII*, the gunnery lieutenant being W. W. Fisher, now Sir William Fisher, and at the time of writing Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet.

Fisher had conceived the idea of making all his gunlayers fire in succession from the same gun, instead of each from his own gun, as was the normal practice. Though such a plan did not provide a test of the armament, it had obvious advantages for breaking records in a competition. The point had been overlooked in the rules, so Fisher was within his rights. On the selected gun had been concentrated the energies of the gunnery staff for weeks. It was fitted with an enormous telescopic sight, and great precautions had been taken to eliminate every possible source of inaccuracy.

The result was amazing. As gun's crew followed gun's crew scores were consistently made of about 20 rounds 19 hits in a minute, the target being a ten feet square of canvas at a distance of over a thousand yards. Of course, it was only a small type of gun, a three-pounder, and not of first importance, but such scores were unheard of, almost incredible, and set new standards.

The following year, however, as might be expected, rules were introduced compelling each gun's crew to fire, when practicable, from its own gun.

As gunnery lieutenant of the *New Zealand* I once made a record of 14 rounds 13 hits in a minute for a six-inch gun, but by methods which nowadays would never be allowed. Projectile and cart-ridge were placed one in front of the other on a

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large tray, and pushed home together by a rammer as soon as the breach was opened. The danger of a smouldering remnant from the previous round igniting the new cartridge before the breach was closed, which would, of course, cause a disastrous explosion, was got over in the following way. A man armed with a hand syringe had to squirt in a jet of water the instant the breach opened. That was precaution number one, but the real safeguard lay in the fact that a disk of wet felt, the same size as the chamber of the gun, was sewn on to the front of each charge. This made the method tolerably safe, and, as I have said, it achieved a phenomenal rate of fire; but it was not suitable for general use owing to the impracticability of wet wads, not to mention the fact that extra men were used for loading. There were even critics who objected that the wet felt disks would upset the ballistics of the gun.

It was thus, however, that gunnery lieutenants strained their ingenuity to steal a march on their rivals, and sometimes some useful improvement emerged.

But all this shooting at a range of one mile was really child's play, and slowly we were beginning to realize it. Sir Percy Scott used to say, "You must learn to walk before you can run," and was for a long time averse to extending the range of our target practices. It was in spite of, rather than because of, his influence that the Navy marched on to the inevitable next stage, the development of the art of hitting at long range.

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The tactics of 1900, in so far as they existed, were Nelsonian. The majority of our admirals intended to lay their ships within a mile of the enemy, and smother him with superior fire. Questioning minds, such as those of Lord Fisher and Sir William May, as well as numbers of the younger generation, asked whether guns which could throw a shot ten miles should not be used at ranges greater than one mile. What would happen, they asked, if the enemy had the legs of us, and refused to come in to one mile and take his gruelling—or again, if he had learnt to hit us at ranges at which we could not hit him? Even a layman, Mr. Arthur Pollen, visiting the Mediterranean Fleet, was struck by this paradox, and preached the Navy a lesson which I will not say was entirely without effect.

In the Mediterranean Lord Fisher instituted a long-range firing competition, and with it changed the faces of warships and the fates of nations. It was a go-as-you-please affair, and the results at first were lamentable. That it would be hard to score hits on a moving platform, from a moving platform which is also rolling and pitching is self-evident, but how intensely difficult the problem is at long range can only be realized by those who have tried it. Nevertheless, faced with the puzzle, and goaded by the twin spurs of competition and promotion, the Navy gradually discovered how to do it, and thus began the next great phase of the gunnery movement.

We still relied on the gunlayer to keep his gun laid and to fire when his sights were on the target,

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but to obtain hits at long range one had to superimpose on this an immensely complicated system for using the ship's armament as one comprehensive whole, and for finding the right range and deflection and keeping these constantly changing data set upon the gunsights.

Once a satisfactory method had been discovered, and the necessary electrical gear had been developed and installed, competition became grimmer than ever. A ship might still do well in her gunlayer's test, but that counted as nothing in comparison with the battle practice. In this she was required to engage a target in unknown conditions at long range, and to secure a respectable number of holes through the canvas. No excuse availed. The gunnery lieutenant who failed to make good—and success or failure was almost entirely in his hands—was swept away without mercy. Those who succeeded reaped the reward of early promotion. Ships' companies 'cocked a chest' or hung their heads according to their place in the great battle practice competition.

One of my clearest memories is of a battle practice carried out by H.M.S. *Bellerophon* a year or two before the War. It was at Invergordon. Captain Evan-Thomas was her Captain, and I was the Gunnery Lieutenant. Everything had been prepared to the last detail. The guns had been calibrated, the sights tested, the complicated machinery of fire control keyed up to a nicety, the crews drilled within an inch of their lives. For weeks we had been out practising daily with sub-calibre

ammunition. All that could be done by mortal man had been done, but in this competition there was always a tremendous element of luck and uncertainty. There were only forty rounds to be fired in all from the ten 12-inch guns—four rounds per gun—and with this meagre allowance the target had to be attacked twice at an unknown range, the course and speed of the target being also unknown. Each attack lasted only three or four minutes. It might be misty and the target barely visible, or funnel smoke might blow across and obscure it; or again, the ship might be vibrating so much at full speed that it would be impossible to use the range-finders effectively. But none of this counted. Success was the only criterion.

When the long-awaited day dawned, the *Bellerophon*, inundated with umpires and recorders of every description, put to sea and was led by another ship to the field of action. There, far in the distance and scarcely visible, a third ship was towing a little target, a mere 30 feet high by 90 feet long.

I was in the control position, a shelter built for the purpose on the fore-mast, and surrounding me the trained personnel, the range-takers, the change of range estimators, the voice-pipemen, and others, all squatted at their instruments. Far below, in the bowels of the ship, and connected with me through a voice-pipe, was the central chamber, where calculations were automatically made and the data for hitting transmitted to the guns.

One of the umpires was with me in the control position. His duty, as I very well knew, would be

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at some critical juncture of the proceedings to inform me that I was 'dead', whereupon I must cease to function, and some other must take my place. Another man was there to record every word that fell from my lips, so that in the event of failure it could be used in evidence against me.

For a long time we twisted and turned in the wake of our leader, who was manœuvring into position. We were steaming full speed, and our mast-head shook like an aspen every time the helm was used. Whichever way we turned, the guns kept on grimly pointing at the target. They were loaded, everything was ready, and the stream of constantly changing data emanating in the first instance from the control position was being continuously set upon the gunsights. Suddenly, when the target was well upon the bow, the flags ran up in our leader, "Open fire".

In those days it was customary to find the range with only one or two guns, and not to use the whole broadside until hitting had been established. Another curiosity of the time was that the second round would not be fired until the first shot had fallen, and had enabled the range to be corrected by the position of its splash. The Battle of Jutland changed all this. In our natural desire not to be wasteful we were far too leisurely. But war is wasteful, and has little room for economy. From Jutland onwards, fire was opened with a full salvo, and subsequent salvos were fired while their predecessors were still in the air.

But to continue. I well knew that every gun-

layer had the data on his sights, and the cross-wires of his telescope on the target. All that was necessary was to order the ranging gun to fire.

Bong! The ship shuddered, and a belch of orange smoke came from B turret, then silence while the projectile mounted skywards on its lengthy journey. After a long pause, a white pillar of water became dimly visible, streaking the distant grey. It was near the target, but to the left, and almost automatically I gave the correcting order, "Right six!" Then, after a short pause, "Fire!" The resulting splash was behind the target, showing that the range was over-estimated, but that we were right for line. "Down 400—fire!"

This time the splash was in front, and still in line. Good! We now had the range. "Up 200. All left guns fire!" Faintly one heard the fire-gongs ringing in the nearer turrets, then came a rippling roar. *Bong—bong—bong—bong!* The mast kicked like a mule's hind leg; hot breath from the guns hit one's forehead like a gust of desert wind, and for several seconds the orange cordite smoke obliterated everything.

Looking down on the bridge, I spied the solitary figure of Commander W. W. Fisher, who was umpiring. From the turrets came the hiss of the air blasts, and a whiff of blue smoke trickled from each muzzle. Then followed the roar of the chain rammers as the next round was being rammed home. It was glorious music. Little lights in the control position told that the right guns were ready to fire, but the fall of the last salvo must be

awaited. Now the smoke was clearing and the target becoming visible once more, when suddenly a forest of white pillars shot up all round it. Looking carefully through high-powered glasses one could see three were behind and two in front of it. Perfect! There must be at least two hits there—perhaps three. No need for further delay. “Right guns fire!” Were the left guns ready? The man watching the little gun-ready lights reported that they were. One weighed the pros and cons of a double salvo, and decided in favour “Left guns fire!” Now we had two salvos in the air, ten projectiles, each worth about a hundred pounds, hurtling through space.

Presently, splash! The first salvo could be seen to have fallen correctly. Splash! So had the second, by Jove, but only just; there was only one round short, whereas ideally there should be two. “Down 100, close the rate 100, right guns fire!”

So it went on through two more tense minutes, till suddenly the signalman watching our leader reported, “Cease fire,” and one had to obey, though with a keen sense of frustration at having to stop just when the target was being so nicely smothered.

Once more our leader began turning and twisting, and we had to follow. The whole process of finding the range had to be gone through again as soon as she had led us round so as to bring the target on our other side, and upset our previous calculations. No need to detail it, for the procedure was much as before, but this time I had the laugh of the umpires, for when I was ordered officially

to die we had already expended all the ammunition allowed.

When it was all over, and I had climbed down the iron ladder inside the mast and emerged on the bridge to hear what my Captain had to say about it, I remember being met by a cheering "Well done, you did let 'em have it!" from W. W. Fisher, but Captain Evan-Thomas, just emerged from the conning tower, looked strained and anxious, and not at all happy. His ship's reputation was at stake, and from his view-point in the conning tower the shoot had not looked too good.

"There seemed to be a lot of rounds off for deflection," was all he said. That was damping, but by no means conclusive, and there was nothing for it but to await the result.

After a long delay, we at last got the umpire's signal reporting 18 hits on the target. Out of 40 rounds that was a very high percentage for long range firing, and, as it turned out, we tied with the *Dreadnought* at the top of the list, and carried the battle-practice cup proudly for six months.

Chapter Two

DIRECTOR FIRING

THE events I have touched on covered a period of about eight years, from 1903 to 1911. During this time the Navy had developed the *Dreadnought* type, thanks to Lord Fisher; had made immense strides in tactics, largely owing to Sir William May; and under the stimulus of Sir Percy Scott had emerged from 'stone age' gunnery to a tolerable weapon proficiency at ranges of 10,000 yards.

Nevertheless, had it been called upon in 1911 to meet an efficient enemy, the Fleet would still have been in difficulties because, in the smoke, haze, and mist of battle, our gunlayers would not have been able to see to aim, and the whole intricate system devised for hitting at long range might well have been brought to nought.

That system had been developed entirely within the Navy, and Scott had had little hand in it, but now he was to make his weight felt again. Ever an original thinker, he could turn his mind upon the battle of the future and see that to which others were blind. He saw a weakness and devised Director Firing to overcome it.

This was an old scheme revived. Director Firing, as Scott was fond of rubbing in, was used by the *Shannon* in her famous and successful action against the *Chesapeake* a century earlier, but the

modern method had little resemblance to its archaic prototype. The new idea was to lay and fire all the guns of the main armament from a master sight in the control position aloft, whence, it might be supposed, a comparatively clear view of the enemy would be obtained. The difficulty lay in securing absolute cohesion between the master sight and the guns.

A trial equipment had been fitted in the *Bellerophon* and a second in the *Neptune*, but both had proved defective, and Scott had to set about producing something better. The Navy as a whole was prejudiced against it, unable to visualize the smoke difficulty and the confusion of a multiplicity of targets which would arise in battle, and thought that the new system would make for slower and less accurate fire.

Sir Percy Scott had now terminated his naval career, largely owing to his singularly unfortunate 'paintwork' signal, which made a *cause célèbre* at the time. A full account of this is to be found in the *British Review* of April 1913, but for the information of the reader who has forgotten it and has not the time to look it up, I give the story in brief.

In November 1907, Lord Fisher was First Sea Lord, Lord Charles Beresford was in command of the Channel Fleet, and Sir Percy Scott commanded the First Cruiser Squadron under Lord Charles.

On November 4th, Lord Charles ordered Sir Percy to have his squadron painted by the 8th,

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preparatory to some important visit to the Fleet. The *Roxburgh*, one of Sir Percy's cruisers, was lying outside the breakwater at Portland, doing gunnery practice; his Flagship was inside. The *Roxburgh* wanted to stay outside to continue her practice, but Scott sent her captain a colloquial signal which acted as a spark and lit a most unseemly conflagration.

It ran: "Paintwork appears to be more in demand than gunnery, so you had better come in in time to make yourself look pretty by the 8th."

Lord Charles was one of those who opposed the introduction of the *Dreadnought* type, and regarded Lord Fisher's reforms as disastrous, and he did not hide his opinions. Doubtless he thought Scott a supporter of the Fisher programme, and disliked him accordingly. By a mere chance the notorious signal came to his notice, and he chose to resent it with all the force at his command. He reprimanded Sir Percy publicly, and requested the Admiralty to supersede him. The Admiralty, while agreeing as to the gross impropriety of the signal, did not supersede Sir Percy, and communication between him and his immediate superior took place thenceforward only in writing.

He continued to fly his flag until February 1909, and then hauled it down for the last time. He was never employed as a vice-admiral, but received a K.B.E., a grant of money, and a baronetcy for his services, and retired on promotion to Admiral in 1913.

There can be little doubt that the trivial paint-

work signal ended his career, and, while its impropriety is unquestioned, I do not for a moment believe that Scott intended to be insulting or disloyal to his chief. He was betrayed by his passionate zeal for gunnery improvement into an indiscretion which, amongst lesser results, robbed him of the high command he would have deserved in the coming war. On the other hand, it enabled him to make a small fortune over Director Firing, which, had he remained in active employment, he could probably not have done.

About this time, I found myself at the Admiralty as assistant to the Director of Naval Ordnance, and intimately concerned with the development of naval gunnery. Thus I can speak from personal recollection of Scott's unceasing advocacy of the Director system.

He devoted himself to this object, and working in close contact with the firm of Vickers at length brought his improved instruments triumphantly to the Admiralty, who thereupon fitted them for trial in the battleship *Thunderer*. This, however, did not satisfy him, for experience told him such trials might extend over years. He knew that to get a real move on the Admiralty no line of approach must be neglected, and they must be worried continually.

I have a letter from him, written in 1912, in which he says, "What I want to do, and what I am going to do, is to improve the gunnery of the Navy. Opposition I have had, opposition I shall have. It is the Country that has suffered by this opposition. Director Firing will come in for all guns. It will be

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pirated, and it will be obstructed, but it will come in."

He had a small wooden model made, showing all the guns of a ship, inter-connected and moving as one, and with this under his arm he called upon the First Lord, Mr Winston Churchill. I can see him now, stepping impatiently along the Admiralty corridor, his short, thickset person immaculately clothed in morning coat and top hat, his little eyes screwed up with a hidden purpose, his Imperial beard and straggly dark moustache making him look far more like the traditional Frenchman than a British naval officer.

The model bore no real resemblance to any practical Director Firing system, but it served to interest the First Lord, who thereupon took up the subject with his technical advisers. The Director of Naval Ordnance held that the apparatus would shortly be tried in the *Thunderer*, and that it must stand or fall by these trials. He refused to be hustled into the adoption of an unproved system. His was the correct official attitude, yet Scott's unceasing agitation was inspired by a genius which transcended the official mind. He could see that his system must come, indeed that it was the only way in which the guns of a ship could be effectively fought in the smoke and fog of a modern action, and he believed that action to be not far off.

In 1911 or 1912 he paid a visit to Kiel, and came back with the story that the Germans already had Director Firing, hoping that this tit-bit would stimulate the Admiralty to action. I do not think

his information was correct, although it is a matter on which the Germans have been most reticent. The general belief now is that their guns were fitted with a gyroscopic arrangement for firing them automatically when the sights were horizontal, but that they were trained¹ in the old way, by men looking along telescopic sights.

In the end the matter settled itself just in time. On November 13th, 1912, the *Thunderer* and *Orion* carried out a competitive battle practice in the broad Atlantic, both ships rolling heavily. The *Orion* had the old individual system, and the conditions were too much for her. She only hit the target once, if my memory serves, while the *Thunderer*, using Director Firing, scored eight or nine hits.

It was Percy Scott's triumph, and from that day on it was only a question of how fast the new gear could be turned out by the manufacturers and fitted in the battle fleet.

Even then the indefatigable pioneer of naval gunnery was not satisfied. Maddening delays ensued while the necessary grants of money were got through the naval estimates, and Scott goaded and shoved as well as he could from outside. When the War did come, it found the Fleet but half equipped, the instruments for the other half being still in the making.

I cannot end this chapter without mentioning Scott's last naval effort. It was on June 5th, 1914, that he wrote his first letter to *The Times* asking,

¹ i.e., moved laterally.

"What is the good of a battleship?" He then proceeded to tell the world that the day of the big ship was over, that the battleships would all be sunk by submarines, and as for merchantmen, one German submarine lying off the mouth of the Thames would dispose of British commerce.

He was partly right and partly wrong. That submarines would sink merchant ships no one at that time believed. It was contrary to international law. But Scott doubtless saw that to a nation fighting for its life international law would count for nothing. Battleships did not suffer so severely as he prophesied, but it cannot be denied that their whole strategy and tactics were fundamentally influenced by the submarine peril. Sir Percy knew well enough that to get a new fact home to the public one must exaggerate, and like Clive in an earlier age he probably held that the end justified the means.

In 1921, when the War was safely over, he seems to have strengthened in his opinion, for he returned to the charge. He wrote, "I have asked the question, what is the use of a battleship, and have received only one direct reply. A midshipman has told me, 'She is no damned good at all!'"

Sir Percy has been gathered to his fathers, but he has left no doubt of his view on the vexed question of the utility of the battleship, whose fighting efficiency he did so much to improve. The Admiralty holds a different view, and so, incidentally, does the author.

These opening chapters were undertaken to tell a post-war world of the tremendous pressure under

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which the Navy developed its gunnery in the immediately pre-war period, but they have turned out quite unexpectedly to be in the main a chronicle of the deeds of one man whose services to the nation should never be forgotten.

Chapter Three

FROM PEACE TO WAR

THE dark hills of Arran, cutting sharply against the star-lit sky, wrapped themselves round the little bay where the battleship *Colossus* swung at her anchor. They gave to the scene a sense of peace and protection.

As commander of the ship I had just performed the ritual of the nine o'clock rounds, diving under men's hammocks along the crowded mess-decks, preceded and followed by petty officers with lanterns. Now the 'carry-on' bugle had sounded, releasing the whole ship from something tense and pent up which prevails while 'rounds' continue, and I was on my way to report 'Rounds Correct' to the Captain.

It was a perfect night at the end of May 1914, and we had as usual been doing gunnery exercises in these smooth and lovely Scottish waters. But the mind of the Fleet was not at ease. The Irish question had been looming up ominously, and ships had been ordered to embark their field guns, usually kept at the base. What could it mean? There could be but one answer. Home Rule for Ireland was about to be placed on the Statute Book. The North had sworn to resist. The Fleet was to coerce the loyal North. That at all events was the local interpretation.

As I entered Captain Walter Smith's cabin he

smiled a welcome and asked me to sit down. He was a sociable man who loved a yarn, and I imagine he suffered much from the enforced isolation and loneliness of a Captain's position. He had a way of detaining any officer who came in to make a report, and of extracting the maximum of companionship from the visit. He also had a special brand of colourless whisky which I have never seen before or since, and he loved to extol its virtues whilst pressing it upon his guests.

"Well, Commander," he said, "what do you intend to do if we are ordered to fight against the North?"

I had never given this question a thought, and, after a little hesitation, replied that I supposed I should obey orders, as the country would be in a pretty pass if the Fleet could not be relied upon to obey the orders of the King's Government.

Captain Smith seemed rather surprised. "Well," he said, "I am not going to."

"Do you mean, Sir, that you——?"

"I mean," he replied, with a strained intensity, "that I shall resign rather than fight the loyalists in the North."

As I returned to my cabin I reflected on this nasty situation, wondering whether I should find myself in command in these most unpleasant circumstances. But fate ruled otherwise, and the murder of the Austrian Archduke set the political world thinking along different lines. The Fleet, instead of coercing Ulster, assembled at Spithead for a review for which the reserves were mobilized.

While the peace of Europe was hanging in the balance, the Navy was straining every nerve to look as smart as paint could make it, and to cheer correctly while waving the cap three times in unison as His Majesty steamed by.

Then it moved to Portland for a few days' drill before dispersal, and as the cloud loomed blacker and blacker, orders came that the reserves were not to be dispersed, and finally a hurried telegram to coal with all despatch and proceed to an unknown destination.

The coaling being unexpected, no colliers were available, and we had to coal from lighters, a slow business which everybody hated. In our zeal to coal more rapidly than any other ship, driven by the eternal competitive spirit, we lost, I remember with deep regret, an officer and an artizan, the one caught up by a wire whip and dropped on deck, fracturing his skull, the other killed by the breaking of a derrick. It was tragic indeed, and these two might well be called the first war casualties. Unable, however, to wait to give our shipmates the military honours of burial, we sailed next day for Scapa Flow.

We were not, of course, at war, but our Commander-in-Chief, Sir George Callaghan, was taking war precautions. He had no mind to be caught as the Russians were caught at Port Arthur by a night destroyer attack as the alternative to the more formal declaration. The Fleet moved without lights, destroyers sweeping ahead, through the Straits of Dover and up the North Sea. Our

destination was, of course, officially 'unknown', but every one in the Fleet guessed it, for it was an open secret that Scapa, remote, spacious, but undefended, was to be our war base.

The general opinion was that this was an exceedingly 'cute move which emanated from the brain of the wise though reticent Admiral Oliver.¹ Scapa, we told each other, was outside the range of German submarines. Hence we could have sea room there to keep in battle trim, whilst our light forces kept touch outside the enemy's harbours. We chuckled, for we knew the Germans would expect a close blockade, and would be completely dumbfounded by our strange tactics.

The German Fleet was, so we read in our papers, in Norwegian waters, and my own reaction to this was regret that we were not taking a leaf out of the Japanese book and forestalling the inevitable by intercepting them on their return. Impossible, no doubt, for our participation in the war hung in the balance till long after we reached Scapa Flow, but one could not help contrasting our own inactive opening gambit with the decisive though unsportsmanlike stroke of our Asiatic ally, who had entered Port Arthur and torpedoed the Russian Fleet before war had been declared.

I remember reading, too, that the Kaiser was, during the crisis, absent from Berlin, just as the former Emperor had been absent during the *démarches* which led up to the war of 1870; which

¹ Now Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry F. Oliver, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O., LL.D. At that time he was a Rear-Admiral and Director of Naval Intelligence.

seemed to indicate that military Germany was manœuvring to bring this war into being in strict accordance with the Bismarckian precedent, a neat alibi being provided, if required, for the Crown.

But there was little time for strategic or political discussion in the wardroom on this hurried journey to the North. As we threaded our way like dark, shapeless monsters of another world through the myriad lights of crowded Dover Straits, past the Thames Estuary and up through the North Sea, with ships' companies at night action stations, all attention was focused on the urgent problem of defending ourselves against a night attack. At any moment our long years of training in night firing with the light guns might be called upon to prove their value. Nobody really knew how we stood in this matter, for we had never fired at night at real live destroyers attacking at full speed. We had engaged hundreds of floating targets, and with certain precautions a good many towed targets, but what would the situation be like when some twenty or thirty destroyers charged down upon us in a mass and loosed their torpedoes? We hoped our arrangements would stand the test, but we did not know. There was nothing to go on, and only the real thing could bring conviction as to where battleships stood in relation to torpedo craft.

All through the Fleet guns were loaded and fingers not far from triggers. Yet there must be no premature firing. No one had forgotten how the Russian Baltic Fleet, not so long before, passing

through the North Sea on its fateful journey to the East which was to end in the Battle of Tsushima, had fired on a fleet of British trawlers, mistaking them for Japanese destroyers, thus very nearly precipitating a war with England. No one wished to repeat their blunder, yet hesitation in the event of a real attack might well be fatal. One minute's delay might undo the British Fleet, for half-a-dozen battleships disabled by torpedoes, even though not sunk, would have destroyed our narrow margin and given the Germans equality.

The British Fleet at that time numbered twenty *Dreadnought* battleships and four battle cruisers, twenty-four in all, whereas the Germans had, either completed or shortly to be completed, thirteen *Dreadnought* battleships and four battle cruisers, a total of seventeen. The pre-*Dreadnought* battleships of either side could hardly be counted in comparison, so inferior were they in guns and speed to the *Dreadnoughts*.

Then again there was the question of how the ships would stand up to torpedo hits. Would the water-tight bulkheads hold, or should we have the same experience as in pre-*Dreadnought* ships—one bulkhead after another leaking, bulging and finally yielding under the pressure of water from the damaged compartment?

All these factors were unknown. We had great confidence in our ships, and immense belief in our gunnery efficiency, but as to our capacity to defend ourselves at night against torpedo attacks, nobody was very happy, and all agreed that the best de-

fence lay in combing the waters ahead with destroyers so that the attack should never reach us.

Although outwardly invisible, a suppressed excitement pervaded the Fleet. Our long years of trial and drudgery were not to be wasted, and the weapon we had forged was to be tested at last. We, whose lives had been one long preparation for something which might never occur, were now to enter the garden of fruition. True, those lives might soon be cut short, but that would not matter if in the spending of them a new Trafalgar could be achieved, and England's course set fair once more for another great period of sea supremacy.

In this spirit, then, the Fleet steamed for two nights and a day, past Scotland and so to Scapa Flow. Had we but known it, Germany was far from thinking of a surprise attack on our ships. She was building on the hope that England would remain neutral, and really believed this would be so, or she would not have prosecuted with machine-like precision her arrangements for bringing about the European War which was to be the first step to world dominance. When England's participation was certain it was too late for Germany to withdraw.

The origin of the War, so plentifully argued, has to my mind been finally and unanswerably explained in Mr. Winston Churchill's *World Crisis*. I am only concerned with current impressions and opinions in the Fleet which reflect the Naval mind at that time.

There was, I think, a double-mindedness about us. We felt war to be inevitable, and yet could hardly credit that such a thing could really happen. Familiar with the idea that Germany meant to make war sooner or later, it was obvious that this was her moment. A favourable set of circumstances gave the appearance of righteousness—of an ally supporting her grievously wronged friend, Austria. The work of broadening the Kiel Canal finished; England distracted by the Irish question, and in any case, in the German view, effete, lacking in warlike virility, and most reluctant to fight; a respectable fleet built up, an army so perfectly organized for the advance into France that it seemed certain Paris could be reached before either Russia with her slow mobilization, or England through blockade, could become effective, even if the latter did come in!

Yes, it was certainly Germany's moment, and with bated breath we watched her take it, whilst I for one, who had studied the opening gambits of Bismarck's military masterpiece, saw similarity in every diplomatic move.

It was not flattering to our vanity to think that Germany so despised us as to have persuaded herself that even her violation of Belgian neutrality would be taken lying down by peace-loving England.

Yet we wondered if Germany was not right after all. There seemed a strange hanging back at Westminster, a reluctance to plunge England into the fray which augured ill. If Germany was to be

allowed to fight France without England's intervention, I for one, and I think most of my contemporaries, believed she would have it all her own way. Democratic France could have no chance against absolutist, militarist Germany. So at least we thought.

We recognized, however, that the entry of our own country into the war, even if seen to be inevitable as well as politically desirable, could not be brought about without first trying every alternative and every avenue of escape, and Sir Edward Grey's effort of mediation was right and entirely justifiable.

In our own memories European war had so often threatened, and each time the threat had died. It seemed incredible that the long-awaited event which was the be-all and end-all of our lives had come at last. Somewhere round the corner, one felt instinctively, was something which would stop it all and bring us back to the normal state of expectation in which we had grown up. We hung like chrysalides suspended between two states of being.

As to strategy, we were aware that Germany, schooled in the art of war, knew only too well the value of attack and of surprise, and therefore we must expect both. Vaguely we wondered what attack and what surprise our own high command had in store for the enemy.

It seemed that the surprise we had was to be the surprise of withdrawal to a distance. England's traditional policy of a close blockade was to be

abandoned in favour of a distant and more partial watch, and thus the whole German scheme of attrition would be dislocated at a stroke. The Admiralty strategy proved in the end successful, but whether the Fleet need have gone so far as Scapa Flow is another matter, and one to which I shall allude later.

Morning found us steaming by divisions through the gloomy islands of the Orkneys. Duncansby Head loomed to port, and the rocky Pentland Skerries to starboard. We filed past Stroma and Swona, whose sole inhabitants were sheep, in through Hoxa Sound with towering Ronaldsay to starboard, and Flotta backed by massive Hoy to port.

Thus the great Fleet entered historic Scapa, and division after division came to anchor under the northern shore, while destroyers tucked themselves away in various convenient corners.

Most of us had been to Scapa before. We knew the queer greyish town of Kirkwall, and some had fished in Loch Stenness or Loch Kircbster, but as we gazed around at the forbidding tracts of green, treeless, boggy-looking land that surrounded us, it occurred to none, I fancy, how well we should know it before the War had come to an end.

In the days that followed its arrival, the Fleet was in a state of suspended animation. Germany was at war with France and Russia, but in England, so far as we could gather from newspapers and wireless messages, hesitation continued. England was not taking a strong line. Perhaps after all we

really should stay out of this war. That would be tragic, so everybody felt. Just shameful! Yet there was absolutely nothing we could do, only wait and hope.

Meanwhile, Sir John Jellicoe had joined the Fleet as second in command, creating a situation full of tensest interest, which I for one could only watch spellbound.

Years back, it had been common talk in the Admiralty that Admiral Jellicoe was being kept in cotton wool to command the Fleet in the Great War. Now the moment had arrived. It remained to be seen whether the rumour was true, and, if so, how the Admiralty would go about the business. To supersede Sir George Callaghan, who had worked the Fleet up to its present state of efficiency and was beloved by all, seemed a dreadful step. The appointment of Sir John Jellicoe as second in command provided a solution, but it did not look like being a permanent one, and when, on the morning of the 4th August, it was announced that Sir John Jellicoe had taken command of the Fleet, in the light of what had already occurred I do not think any one was surprised. Nevertheless, our hearts went out in deepest sympathy to our old commander, who was at that moment drinking the cup of bitterness to the dregs.

There could now be no reasonable doubt that England would be in it, and when the Fleet sailed on the 4th we knew that our hour had come. That evening came the announcement that Great Britain had declared war upon Germany, and the King's

noble message to the Fleet thrilled everybody.¹ 'The sure shield of Britain'—that was a new expression as applied to the Navy. We turned it over in our minds, and it seemed faultless. It exactly described the Navy's function. Heaven send that England, behind that shield, would emerge inviolate.

The battle fleet was steaming across the North Sea, the cruisers sweeping to the southward, and we fed upon rumours. Most of these appeared to concern the liner *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, which was believed to be trying to make her way towards Germany, and which we hoped to intercept. Then came garbled rumours about the *Königin Luise*, a German minelayer which was reported sunk, but it was not until we returned to Scapa on the morning of the 7th, to fill up with coal preparatory to sailing again that evening, that we got the true story.

The day after war had been declared, a British force consisting of the cruiser *Amphion* and two destroyers, the *Lance* and *Landrail*, had caught and sunk the *Königin Luise*, but only after she had laid a minefield in the southern part of the North Sea. The minefield thus laid in international waters was the first naval breach of international law committed by the Germans. Next morning, tragically enough, on her way home the *Amphion* ran into this very field, and striking two mines, was lost.

It was a singular opening to the War, showing at

¹ The King's message was: "At this grave moment in our national history, I send to you and through you to the officers and men of the Fleet of which you have assumed command, the assurance of my confidence that under your direction they will revive and renew the old glories of the Royal Navy, and prove once again the sure Shield of Britain and of her Empire in the hour of trial."

once that the mine as a weapon, which, under Lord Fisher's administration, we had despised and rejected, had become the 'headstone of the corner'.

Yes, it was indeed a tragedy, and how the far-sighted father of the modern Navy came to make such an error of judgment has always puzzled me. From the moment when submarines first proved themselves practical weapons, he had seized upon that pretext to discourage expenditure on mines, with the result that not only had we very few mines, but those we had were bad. They had a way of going off very soon after they had been laid, they broke away easily from their moorings, and when they did explode against a ship's bottom they were not sufficiently powerful.

The Germans, on the other hand, had made a special feature of mining, and had developed a most elaborate and effective mine, which they were determined to lay wherever they thought fit, with complete disregard for international conventions.

From that day forward, naval strategy, and naval tactics too, became deeply tinged with the considerations and limitations arising from the possibilities of enemy mines.

While we were hurriedly coaling, parcels appeared on board which showed that the heart of England was with its Fleet. Great piles of game, venison and vegetables had been sent up by people in Scotland, and we received these spontaneous gifts with surprise and gratitude. A little later, as the nation began to picture the Fleet on a lonely watch in the cold North Sea, huge packages of books and

magazines arrived, and warm clothing of every kind. We had hardly time to appreciate the great volume of goodwill which had prompted, and the immense effort which had realized, this demonstration of sympathy and confidence in the Navy.

Chapter Four

THE GRAND FLEET AT SEA

I LOOK back upon the month which followed as one of the most strenuous of my life. The Fleet was at sea almost continuously, only returning to Scapa every three or four days to coal, and sailing again the same evening.

Each time we visited the base, something had been done towards its defence. Merchant vessels had been sunk in some of the less important entrances in order to block them, and a few small guns had been mounted on the headlands commanding the others. An old cruiser, too, was brought up to command the main entrance with her guns.

The Admiralty had adopted a new system for keeping the Fleet supplied with stores. Instead of the old plan whereby each ship made out written demands to satisfy its requirements, stores were now sent up in mixed units according to somebody's idea of what each ship would be likely to want. It seemed a grand notion at first, and the bo'sun's mouth watered as coil after coil of wire rope, bolts of canvas, grass hawsers, coal bags, shovels and other delectable items poured on board. But soon, as we found the store-rooms were becoming choked, the 'unit' system became a joke and was discontinued.

I recall, in particular, one hectic scamper into Scapa. We had to coal and take in ammunition and be ready to sail the same night, and in the

BLAST AND COUNTERBLAST

course of the day received a signal to paint the outside of the ship a different shade of grey. One does not put paint over coal dust, nor yet over wet surfaces, but 'needs must when the devil drives'. Somehow or other the ship was washed down after coaling, and black-faced men slapped on the paint as best they could.

We had torpedo nets in those days, and another little item which added to the fun was getting these out as soon as the ships were anchored and furling them the last thing before sailing, and not only furling but lashing them securely with wire lashings. Unhappy the ship whose nets, either as the result of heavy seas or damage from the enemy, got loose and, dragging round her stern, fouled her propellers.

I can see the old *Colossus* slipping out of Scapa that evening in the failing twilight. She is nosing up to her next ahead, third in the line of the First Battle Squadron. The last of the painting parties are being hauled aboard, smeared with grey paint and coal dust. On the upper deck hoses are playing on the guns and superstructures, washing off the thick layer of grime. On the fo'c'stle, the cables are being lashed for action, whilst all round the upper deck petty officers are giving a final touch to the lashings of the torpedo nets. From the big guns comes an occasional 'pung' as a tube is fired to test the circuits ready for action. One watch of seamen is already moving silently to its gun stations, for the guns will be kept part-manned until we return to harbour.

On the bridge all is order and decorum. Quiet orders for helm and speed break the silence periodically, exactly as they have done on a thousand previous occasions.

Signalmen on the signal bridge below are making too much noise, as signalmen always do—the man reading the signals from the flagship's shaded flash-lamp is calling them out word by word for another to write down.

One by one the divisional officers, still looking like niggers, having had no time to wash since emerging from the collier, climb to the bridge and report to me their section of the ship properly darkened and watertight doors closed. This means that they have examined every scuttle to see that its iron cover, known as a deadlight, has been properly screwed down, and that there is no possibility of any internal light showing from outside. In the bowels of the ship, hundreds of naked men are scrubbing themselves down, all laughing and joking.

"361.2 tons an hour," says one, "that's a bleeding record. Strike me pink if it ain't!"

"Garn," says his mate, "the *Iron Duke* did 370."

"She don't count," puts in a third, "look at the colliers she gets. Trust the flagship to 'ave the best colliers while we gets the rag, tag and bobtail built in the year one. Wonder if Fritz is going to show up this time. . . ." and so *ad infinitum*.

On the mess deck a fragrant smell of bacon and eggs exudes from the galley. Coaling records and

the doings of Fritz may be something to talk about, but supper is what really matters.

"'Urry up, Cookie, get them eyes and rashers. I 'ave the first watch,¹ I 'ave."

Not a word of complaint, not a quarrel. The whole ship's company is in a beatific state of delirious contentment. The time has come at last to show England what they can do.

Soon night had fallen in earnest, and the ship was moving slowly to the North Sea swell. Nothing was visible but a single faint blue stern light, which, when examined through glasses, revealed the black heaving shape of our next ahead. The officer of the watch peered anxiously forward to keep his distance in conditions which had at first seemed terribly difficult, but soon became second nature.

It was my duty to be on the bridge during the first watch, and the Captain, the Hon. Edward S. FitzHerbert² relieved me at midnight for the middle watch, while the navigator took on the task of general supervision to deal with emergencies in the dark hours from 4 a.m. onwards.

Sometimes we swept in a great body far down into the North Sea, always in the hope of meeting some German force. At others, the ships separated for target practice, and it was on one of these occasions that it was first realized we were being beset by enemy submarines. It was the *Monarch*, carrying out gunnery practice to the east of the Orkneys on the 8th August, who first reported a torpedo had

¹ First watch; 8 p.m. till midnight.

² Captain the Hon. Edward S. FitzHerbert relieved Captain G. W. Smith on the 29th June, 1914. He is now Admiral Lord Stafford, K.C.B.

been fired at her. *Colossus* was in sight of her at the time, and the general opinion was that the *Monarch* had got the 'jim-jams'. But on the same day the *Iron Duke* and *Dreadnought* both reported having seen submarines. The Germans had discovered our whereabouts, and if anybody still had the illusion that Scapa Flow was too far away from the Elbe for submarine operations, that illusion was now shattered, for the very next day we were delighted by the news that the cruiser *Birmingham* had rammed and sunk the enemy submarine U.15.

That day, the 9th August, introduced a new form of naval tactics—zig-zagging. It was the first concession of the big ship to her bitterest foe. From then on, battleships were never to proceed in a straight line. They must tack to and fro, first to one side of their course and then to the other, so that the lurking submarine, snatching his periscope view from moment to moment as he watched his prey approach, would be deceived as to its line of advance, and would fail to get within attacking distance. It was a most effective defence, and must have spared us many a torpedo, while in point of reduction of speed it was not really as serious as it looked.

On the night of the 14th, the Fleet started a deeper thrust than usual into the German half of the North Sea. On the 15th, hopes ran high, as it was seen that the Fleet was being screened by mine-sweepers, and was evidently up to something not hitherto attempted. But the operation was as fruit-

less as its predecessors, and at 9.30 a.m. on the 16th the Commander-in-Chief signalled 'No luck' and the Fleet turned round. After an immense expenditure of coal, we were again steaming back to refuel, this time to Loch Ewe, having accomplished nothing.

The real significance of this drive was that large numbers of troops were being moved from Ireland to England, and it was hoped that the Germans would make some attempt to interfere with them, but they made no move. I am inclined to think their intelligence system had broken down, and they really knew nothing of what was going on in England. The cleverness with which we had allowed their spies to live on in England in blissful unconsciousness that they were known and watched, and had then arrested them immediately war broke out, must have dealt their intelligence service a severe blow, from which it was hard to recover.

But of all this we at Scapa knew nothing, and our work went on with unvarying monotony. We never seemed to stay more than one night, if that, in our base. Sometimes we were doing gunnery, at others practising battle tactics. On one occasion the battle fleet was spread out across the trade route to assist in the interception of merchant ships bringing cargoes to German or Scandinavian ports. That seemed to me a rather rash manœuvre, but no one questioned that the Commander-in-Chief had good reasons for it. It bore no fruit, however, and gradually it dawned upon us that it might be a long time

before we were to have a crack at the German Fleet.

On the 28th August came the news of the action of the Heligoland Bight—a heartening success. We knew little more than had been officially announced. There had been a glorious *melée*, in which three German cruisers and a couple of destroyers had been sent to the bottom, our own battle-cruisers, cruisers, destroyers and submarines having been engaged. One of the chief points of interest, I remember, was that Von Tirpitz's son, a Lieutenant in the *Mainz*, had been taken prisoner.¹

We did not know that the Heligoland Bight operation, though well conceived by Commodore Keyes to intercept German destroyers or cruisers coming back from night patrol, carried the seed of failure in the mode of its performance; that, as originally planned, the raid was to have been carried out exclusively by a force independent of the Grand Fleet command, namely, destroyers under Commodore Tyrwhitt and submarines under Commodore Keyes, and it was only on Sir John Jellicoe's suggestion that the battle-cruisers under Admiral Beatty and the First Cruiser Squadron under Commodore Goodenough were at the last moment permitted to support; nor yet that Commodore Keyes, controlling his submarines from the destroyer *Lurcher*, was blissfully ignorant of this support and might well have, indeed did, mistake the supporting force for enemy vessels. We did not

¹ The German cruisers lost were the *Mainz*, the *Köln*, and the *Ariadne*. Grand Admiral Von Tirpitz was the German Minister of Marine.

realize that, quite apart from the mistake in not telling Commodore Keyes of the supporting force, the plan was so loose that three British squadrons were operating practically independently in the same waters, a situation which was 'asking for trouble'; nor again that this situation was saved in masterly fashion by the splendid fighting instinct and co-operation of three men.

Tyrwhitt, who, in the *Arethusa*, fought cruiser after cruiser, first the *Frauenlob*, whom he forced to flee when his own ship had only one gun left in action, then in succession the *Stralsund*, the *Stettin*, the *Mainz*, and finally the *Stralsund* and *Stettin* together, only then sending an urgent signal for assistance. This signal he couched in the most formal terms. He was a man who, in normal circumstances, when signalling to a senior officer, never used the preface 'submit' deeming it unnecessary verbiage, but on this occasion, perhaps to show that there was no real hurry, he signalled 'Submit, I am hard pressed.'

Goodenough, who, with his instinct for going to the right place, arrived on the scene in the nick of time, and sank the *Mainz*.

Beatty, who, having waited in the offing for hours in support, knowing little or nothing of what was going on in the misty waters surrounding Heligoland, where German protective minefields might be expected, and where cruisers, destroyers and submarines of both sides seemed to be inextricably mixed, sailed in at the psychological moment with his whole battle-cruiser force, dispersed the enemy

and promptly sank two of his cruisers. Only a sailor can appreciate the risks he took and the essential courage and rightness of his decision.

We ought not to forget Jellicoe, who sent the battle-cruisers, nor yet Lord Fisher, who had conceived the battle-cruiser type for this very kind of operation, as a means of bringing crushing superiority to bear on enemy light forces.

At any rate, we felt that the Germans were at least real, and a naval action began to seem a little less improbable, although our own absence far in the north, while lucky battle-cruisers and smaller craft had been having such a grand skirmish, made one rather jealous.

Already I found myself asking why we were so far away. The idea that up here we were outside the submarine zone had been completely exploded, for reports of enemy submarines were of daily occurrence. Why not Rosyth in the Firth of Forth, where at least we had the makings of a dockyard, and where the Fleet could surely be given absolute protection? What, one asked, was the subtle wisdom behind the Admiralty's strategy? Our base was no base at all, for we were afraid to stay in it, and the Fleet was rapidly wearing itself out by continual cruising. No one could expect an inferior German fleet to come up all this way to fight us. It would obviously, if it came out at all, keep reasonably close to its own base, so that if it encountered a superior force it could retreat.

I for one, however, have always been inclined to credit my naval superiors with wisdom. The naval

training of junior officers included no strategy, and the Admiralty staff, like Gods on Olympus, moved in a sphere so far away that one tended to regard them as infallible. One had to possess one's soul in patience and be concerned only with the fighting efficiency of one's own unit, leaving the higher command to the Higher Command.

Looking back on those days, I feel sure that the whole spirit of the Fleet was one of confidence in its Commander-in-Chief and in the Admiralty, even though we could not understand what we were trying to do or why.

Yet I am confident that the proper place for the Fleet was the Firth of Forth, and not Scapa Flow. Notwithstanding the wicked neglect of the Government in the years preceding 1914 to complete this base, the Fleet should have gone there, if not at once, at least the moment it was found that Scapa was beset by submarines.

It is said that there was not room for the Fleet above the Forth Bridge, and that the region below the Bridge could not be defended against submarines; that an anti-submarine net long enough to keep them out was a gigantic undertaking beyond our means at the time; and that outside the Firth of Forth was a large tract of mineable water in which gunnery exercises would have been difficult, if not impossible.

I hold that the paramount importance of placing our Fleet where it could readily intercept the German Fleet outweighed all this; that a large part of the Fleet could have been moored to buoys above

the Forth Bridge; and that outside this a sufficient area for the remainder could have been netted and mined within a few days, so effectively that no submarine would attempt it. Beyond this, a skilful disposition of defensive minefields, with secret channels for our own Fleet, swept daily, would have provided adequate safety, and an area could also have been swept behind a minefield of our own for gunnery exercises.¹

If we wanted a fast detached squadron even nearer the enemy base, and I think we did, then the battle-cruisers might have been based in the Tyne or Humber. This disposition would have had every advantage—the main Fleet in a position to intercept the enemy, whether he issued from the Skagerrak or the Heligoland Bight, the advanced force considerably nearer him than in our actual disposition, yet not too distant (as it was in the actual disposition) from its main supporting force.

All this could have been done, I am convinced, at the outset, if a more offensive doctrine had prevailed at the Admiralty, but nothing can excuse, and no one can forgive, the parsimony which had postponed the development of Rosyth in the Firth of Forth.

Mr. Churchill is unconvincing when, in *The World Crisis*, 1911 to 1915, he discusses this point. He says, "It was rightly foreseen that by closing

¹ Inside the Forth Bridge there is a stretch 4 miles long averaging half-a-mile broad, with depths of over 5 fathoms. Outside the line Meadulse Rocks—Oxcars—Inch Mickery would be easily blocked by defensive mines and nets, and between this and the Bridge lies a stretch 3 miles long by 1 broad also suitable for big ships. An outer defence line runs naturally through Inch Keith.

the exits from the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, German commerce would be almost completely cut off from the world. . . . It was hoped that this pressure would compel the German Fleet to come out and fight, not in his own defended waters, but at great numerical disadvantage in the open sea."

This hope was unduly optimistic. The Germans never came out into the open sea, nor did they ever intend to fight at a great numerical disadvantage. They only came out in the hope of creating a situation which would enable them to fall on an inferior British force, and which would give opportunities to their submarines. The great distance of the Grand Fleet favoured such an operation. As soon as they found themselves in hopeless inferiority they withdrew, and escaped as best they could.

Moreover, the closing of the exits from the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean was done by cruisers. The Grand Fleet could have supported those cruisers from the Firth of Forth just as well as, if not better than, from Scapa. Corbett, writing on the same subject in *Naval Operations*, is equally unconvincing.

Meanwhile, as we threshed aimlessly hither and thither, we read of our brothers in the army, fighting gloriously against immensely superior forces, and a kind of impotent shame began to take hold of us. One threw it off, but again and again it returned.

Pictures rise to my memory of scenes that will never be repeated. I can see the whole horizon covered with warships, as the Grand Fleet moves

at 17 knots in a south-easterly direction on one of its periodical sweeps. The battle fleet is in four divisions in line ahead, disposed abeam, the columns being about a mile apart, and a mile or two ahead is a division of old battleships known as 'mine bumpers', since their function was to indicate, by blowing up, the presence of mines. Each division is screened by destroyers, and the cruisers are far ahead, almost out of sight.

The Fleet sweeps forward in perfect station, moving as one, under one controlling will. Suddenly a destroyer has hauled out and stopped, blowing off steam. She is signalling, "Floating mine in sight." Two flags rise to the flagship's yard-arm. "Stop engines." The whole Fleet stops, but glides forward under its own way. The destroyer is ordered to destroy the mine. She goes close to it. Half-a-dozen rounds of sub-calibre ammunition and there is a black explosion. The floating mine, which has doubtless broken away from some mine-field and may have been carried many miles, is no more. "Speed 17 knots," flutters from the *Iron Duke's* yard-arm, and the Fleet moves on again.

What is that immense lump of a ship away on the port quarter? It is the *Campania*, one-time greyhound of the Atlantic, which has joined the Fleet to carry aircraft. She charges about, first losing ground while she puts her seaplanes in the water, then endeavouring to catch up again as best she may, but finds the effort to keep up with the Fleet beyond her. After one day of it, she is sent into harbour.

BLAST AND COUNTERBLAST

On another occasion, rather later on, the divisions of the battle fleet are operating separately. *Colossus* is second in the line led by the *Marlborough*, astern of her the *Neptune* and beyond her the *Hercules*. Some three or four miles astern again is the remainder of the battlefleet. It is between 12 and 1 p.m. I am on the bridge. Suddenly I see the line of a torpedo track coming towards us, whilst at the same time it is spotted by the look-outs and a warning signal hoisted. I watch it closely. Clearly it will pass well astern, but may catch the *Neptune*. It will be her business to take independent avoiding action if she considers herself endangered, but she is doing nothing, just following her next ahead. One sees the line, a whitish streak advancing towards her. . . . Relief ! The torpedo has passed astern of her. She is safe.

Now our Admiral is altering the course of the squadron, at the same time signalling to the divisions far astern the presence of an enemy submarine. This has to be done by searchlight, a slow method. I watch the other squadrons with anxiety, for in spite of the warning they are advancing straight over the area in which the submarine must be. What can they be thinking of ? Why not turn away ? But the facts are fully known to the high command, and there is nothing for me to do.

A quarter of an hour or so later, the Fourth Battle Squadron, led by the *Dreadnought*, was passing through the very waters in which we had been attacked, but it was too far off to see clearly what was going on. Nothing apparently had occurred,

and I had gone down to lunch. Then a signal was brought in by a very delighted-looking signalman, reporting that the *Dreadnought*, sighting the submarine close to, had turned towards her and rammed her, and as she did so the bow of the submarine emerged so that her number, "U.29", was clearly read. She sank, and there were no survivors. U.29 was the famous submarine which, commanded by Commander Weddigen, had made herself notorious by the damage she had done in the Channel. She was presumably on her return journey. She never reached Germany, however, but until the War was over the Germans never found out why.

These little incidents, and others of like nature, were all we had to remind us that we were at war, but in harbour things were more lively, as the following chapter will show.

Chapter Five

FROM PILLAR TO POST

IN October 1914, when the Fleet was beginning to find it essential to make rather longer stays in harbour, the submarine menace in northern waters was intensifying despite our patrols of destroyers and trawlers, and submarines were continually being reported here, there and everywhere. Often their presence was confirmed by the track of a torpedo, but fortunately these generally missed.

On the 7th a submarine was reported inside Loch Ewe, and all ships present were at once ordered to sea. On the 9th, two torpedoes were fired at the *Antrim*, the flagship of the Third Cruiser Squadron. The torpedoes missed, and the *Antrim* failed in her attempt to ram the submarine.

On October 12th, when the battle fleet returned to Scapa, it was observed that a submarine net obstruction was in place, though the Admiral commanding the base described it as only 'partial'. It did at any rate provide an appearance of security, and a German submarine would think twice before attempting to go through it.

On the 15th, the *Theseus* was attacked in her position on the trade route, and on the 16th the destroyer *Swift* picked up a raft with officers and men on board, the first intimation received that the old cruiser *Hawke* had been sunk by a submarine on

the previous day. The submarine was a cunning one, for she had hung about in the vicinity of the raft in the expectation of the arrival of a rescuing vessel, and when the *Swift* arrived she had been promptly attacked. The torpedo missed, however. On the same day, we heard that the destroyer *Nymph* had rammed a submarine, though without sinking her, and later in the afternoon the shore batteries on Hoxa Island, at the entrance to the Flow, reported a submarine close to the entrance.

The Fleet, at anchor under the north shore with nets out, at once became all animation. Some of the ships had no nets, and to protect these colliers were got under way and manœuvred alongside them. Destroyers and small craft dashed out into the bay and started at high speed to hunt for the submarine which it was believed had got in. One of the battleships in the outer line sighted what was thought to be a periscope, and began to fire. Further out, near the entrance, some destroyers were firing. It was a windless day, grey and muggy, and the Flow was so smooth that it might have been covered with oil. As the destroyers dashed around, the waves of their wakes spread outward until, cutting into the wake of some other craft, they would cause a little commotion which looked for all the world exactly like a periscope moving through the water. Several such formations were fired at and disappeared. To an uncritical observer it seemed as if the Flow was filled with submarines, though the less credulous officers could not bring themselves to believe even one had got in.

While the Fleet was raising steam with all dispatch, each ship sending reports to the flagship as to how soon she could be ready, certain confirmation that an enemy submarine was amongst us seemed to be given by a torpedo which was clearly seen to be running, fortunately well clear of the Fleet. That apparently settled it in the minds of everybody, but later came a signal from a destroyer reporting that at the moment of putting her helm over to turn at high speed a torpedo had accidentally slipped out of her tube and had run. We were still in the land of guesswork!

Meanwhile, the Fleet was to sail in a few minutes, and nets had to be furled preparatory to moving, thus exposing the ships fully to attack. But no attack came, and as the great Fleet filed out in the darkening evening, squadron by squadron, division by division, each picked up and escorted by its attendant destroyers, we asked ourselves whether the whole affair had not been a false alarm.

Could there be a more exasperating form of warfare than this, in which you were never sure until the blow had been struck whether you were fighting anybody or whether you were simply a victim of what in the Navy is described as 'panic'? Personally, I disbelieved in that submarine, but the Commander-in-Chief, convinced that Scapa was unsafe, took the Fleet away, distributing it between Lough Swilly in the north of Ireland, and Loch Nakeal in the west of Scotland. My squadron went to Lough Swilly, and on the way we worked day and night to make an anti-submarine defence for the mouth

of the harbour, which we installed immediately on arrival.

What were we to think now? Where was the vaunted strangle-hold of the British Fleet over Germany? Scapa Flow had been bad enough, but how could we hope to pounce upon the enemy's fleet, should it emerge, from the distant harbours of northern Ireland and Western Scotland. I think everybody must have felt, and I certainly did, that we had suffered a strategic defeat. We had been driven so far away as to lose our grip, and, thinking of the days when work on the dockyard at Rosyth had been postponed, and when Scapa, though designated in the war plans as our base, had been left without a single penny spent on its defence, one's belief in the infallibility of the Admiralty received a rude shaking.

As it turned out, we were punished for our sins, though not so severely perhaps as we deserved. We might have lost an opportunity of destroying the German fleet, and indeed our stay was terminated by the appearance in the North Sea of German battle-cruisers, which was the immediate cause of our return to Scapa. Our punishment was the loss of a battleship.

It happened in this way. The Germans had cleverly developed, unknown to us, a new weapon in the minelaying submarine, and some of these had been laying little groups of mines which caused us great annoyance. Such a group had been laid, though this time by a surface vessel,¹ off the north

¹ The *Berlin*.

coast of Ireland. The *Audacious*, carrying out target practice with the Second Battle Squadron, struck a mine and flooded her port engine room. From scraps of signals picked up, we gathered that the ship was, after great difficulty, being successfully brought in. Then we heard that the *Olympic* had taken her in tow, then that the hawsers had broken, then that the tugs had got hold of her; then, rather ominously, that the ship had been abandoned. When night fell, she had still not arrived.

I was on deck at about 9 o'clock, and suddenly saw the sky lit up to the northward by an orange tongue of flame. I guessed what had happened, and when, about a minute later, I heard a muffled roar, I had no further doubt. For some reason never to be explained, the *Audacious* had blown up and gone to the bottom. Wrapped in the dark shadows of the Lough, the Fleet lay in mourning silence.

Truly our heads were bowed at that time, and what the feelings of our loved and trusted Commander-in-Chief can have been it is hard to imagine. The North Sea abandoned, one of our latest battleships struck by one mine, one single little mine, and thereby so damaged that she had to be abandoned through fear of sinking; and after that—explosion.

We heard afterwards that the ship had rolled over to a steep angle, and concluded that the explosion must have resulted from projectiles containing high explosive tumbling about in her shell-rooms.

But if this were the explanation, it really made matters worse, for it showed that the ship would have sunk if she had not blown up, and that our shells were unsafe if given a moderate drop.

Meanwhile, food for discussion was provided by strict orders having been issued that on no account was the loss of the *Audacious* to be revealed, and to make the illusion more complete, her name was kept to the front in reports of the doings of the Fleet published in succeeding days. However, since her helpless condition, if not her actual explosion, had been witnessed by numerous Americans on board the *Olympic*, it seemed doubtful if the deception could be kept up for long, even though the *Olympic* herself was detained for a day or two to keep those neutral mouths shut.

Leaving Lough Swilly on November 3rd, we cruised for four days, entering Scapa to coal on the 7th, and immediately laid extra submarine obstructions to back up those in place at the mouth of the harbour. Our obstacles took the form of light indicator-nets, which it was hoped would break away if struck by a submarine, and, towing along the surface, indicate her position.

Now started a period in which the Grand Fleet stayed for rather longer intervals in its base. Although the submarine obstacles were far from complete, still they did amount to something, and the number of patrol vessels had been greatly increased. The impossibility of keeping the ship permanently at sea was beginning to be realized, as the Fleet was showing unmistakeable signs of wear and

tear. The condenser tubes were giving trouble, and all over the Fleet signs were not lacking that some periods of rest were essential. Winter gales were coming on. Some of the older ships, meeting these at sea, arrived a sorry sight, while even inside the Flow the fury of the gales blew colliers ashore, and necessitated ships remaining at anchor with steam on their engines.

Nor did the submarine menace abate, for on November 24th came the warning news that our patrols had sunk a German submarine just outside the entrance of the Flow. She had been rammed, and, finding the damage irreparable, had come to the surface and surrendered, but her sea cocks were open, and she sank as soon as the crew had been got on deck.

Early in November had come the news of the disastrous Battle of Coronel, in which the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* had been lost with all hands. Admiral Cradock had evidently fought against a greatly superior force, and there had been a heavy gale at the time, which prevented him from fighting his main deck six-inch guns. These excuses crowded to the mind, but they did not satisfy. The patent and ugly fact was that we had suffered a defeat. The whole world knew it, and the British Navy's tradition of invincibility had received a check. One asked oneself why Cradock had had an inferior force, and why the *Good Hope*, if she must fight against heavy odds, had been so handled as to give such a poor account of herself. We had, of course, all lost personal friends. We were sure the fight had

been a gallant one, but gallantry was not enough. There must be cunning, and tactical skill. Moreover, a type of cruiser which, though old, we had believed in and admired, stood revealed as powerless against more modern rivals. I think everyone was disquieted, yet in conversation I heard no word of criticism passed—comment was confined to the bad luck which had caused Cradock to meet a superior force in unfavourable conditions.

A few days later, the cheering news that the *Sydney* had sunk the *Emden*, thus removing a gad-fly which for months had been stinging Britain, came to relieve our gloom.

Meanwhile, unknown to us, the battle-cruisers *Inflexible* and *Invincible* were already speeding on their way to wipe out the insult. Admiral Sturdee was in command, Jackie Fisher having sent him out, as we heard later, to clear up his own mess, for it was he who, as Chief of the War Staff at the Admiralty, had presumably made the dispositions which brought about the Battle of Coronel. If we had been unlucky before, Fortune must have felt ashamed of herself, for this time she positively beamed upon us. Sturdee might have had to hunt that German squadron up and down the Atlantic and the Pacific for months, but instead he ran into it the very day after his arrival at the Falkland Islands. Everybody knows how, all unconscious of his presence, Admiral Von Spee led his victorious squadron to a raid on the Falkland Islands, thereby walking into the very jaws of death, with the happy result that the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig* and

Nürnberg were sent to the bottom with no loss to ourselves—the cleanest sea victory of modern times. Only the *Dresden*, too fast for our cruisers, had escaped, and Jackie's characteristic comment to Sturdee is believed to have been, "You should have caught the *Dresden*."

We were avenged. The hidden feeling of shame was gone; one felt able to laugh again! Well done, Jackie, that's the stuff to give 'em! And incidentally, one noted that the battle-cruiser had scored a second time. No other type could have done it.

Then came the 'Dogger Bank' on the 24th January, another disappointment. Warned by the Admiralty of impending events, the Grand Fleet was at sea, and while Sir David Beatty with the battle-cruisers was engaged, the battle fleet was steaming fast towards him. It was 140 miles away, however, and only reached the vicinity of the action at 4.30 p.m., long after the German force, with the *Blücher* sunk and two battle-cruisers heavily hit, had retired into harbour.

If we had only known it, something happened in this battle which was of immense help to the Germans. The German battle-cruiser *Seydlitz* was hit in her after-turret by the *Lion*, and a great fire flamed up. This penetrated to the magazine, which was closed and flooded only just in time. The ship was within an ace of blowing up. As a consequence, the Germans, profiting by their experience, fitted all kinds of baffles in the turrets of their whole fleet to prevent a similar occurrence. Had we done the same we should not, in all probability, have lost the

Indefatigable, the *Queen Mary* and the *Invincible* eighteen months later at Jutland.

It must not be supposed that in our waiting periods at Scapa we sat still and twiddled our thumbs. On the contrary, everybody was kept cheerful by being kept busy. Neither was recreation forgotten. A golf course was made on Flotta Island, and every afternoon it was crowded. Sir John Jellicoe used to land for an hour's hard golf. He had the right of way; everybody let him through, and he went round at a great pace, playing a kind of tip and run. A number of football grounds were made for the men, and in fact a highly organized monastic community now proceeded to show that it could live contentedly enough without feminine society for a year or more. Ships were constantly exercising inside the Flow, where they could fire their six-inch guns, going outside for heavy gun firing and tactics.

The probability of a Fleet action, however, was beginning at last to seem as remote as in days before war had been declared. It was impossible to keep that feeling of 'immediacy', as incident after incident passed us by. We knew that it had ever been so in the past; that for months and even years in naval wars of old the British Fleet had cruised off enemy ports, and we consoled ourselves by the thought that in almost every case a battle had been fought in the end; that our months of waiting were really nothing, and that the great Fleet was performing its traditional role under modern conditions in keeping the enemy hemmed into his harbours, preserving the seas for our own merchantmen and

tightening the blockade. Had we known how ineffective the blockade really was at that time, and how cargoes of military utility were being poured into Scandinavian ports and thence to Germany, I am sure the feeling of the Fleet would have been one of despair. But we did not know, and so life went evenly forward, fighting the winter gales and combatting the lethargy which ever strives to fasten upon a body of men doomed to inaction.

Nearly everyone developed a hobby of some kind. Ships vied with each other in the concerts they gave, and *Colossus* was fortunate in having amongst her "duration" stokers a professional female-impersonator from the music hall stage. He used to write to all the well-known actresses asking for their cast-off clothes, and he often got them. His letters always began, "Dear Miss —, You are my favourite actress." and the disarming flattery generally had the desired effect.

Our Paymaster was a great arm-chair strategist, and in season and out he never ceased to condemn our policy of inertia. He maintained that a division of the Grand Fleet should be in the Baltic, and that a close blockade of Germany was essential. How they were to be maintained when in there was a matter he left to others, but his notions, which no one took seriously, formed an eternal theme for dinner-table argument. When at last he realized that he was in a minority of one, he dropped that theory and instead began evolving a new religion, which kept him busy until the end of the War, when he published a book on it.

FROM PILLAR TO POST

It was the leisure afforded by these prolonged stays in harbour which induced some of our energetic officers to start a *Colossus* periodical, known as *The Colossian*, in the first number of which I wrote an ironical ode supposed to be from the British to the German Fleet, from which I venture to quote one verse, sparing the reader the remaining seven.

We know you love your home, dear,
Somewhat narrow though it be;
But when Daddy spends his days, dear,
Up at Berlin, on the Spree,
It isn't fair to keep you
Shut up by lock and quay—
You ought to see the world, dear,
So do come out to sea.

From May 1915 onwards, however, I was engrossed in another matter, which absorbed every moment of my time, and of which I tell in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

THE BIRTH OF AN INVENTION

IN the early months of 1915, the feeling gradually grew in the Fleet that the mine, rather than the submarine, was the principal danger we had to combat. Minefields were constantly being found, obviously laid by submarines. In addition, the Moray Firth had been heavily mined, and for several days, while the field was being explored and the channel swept, one of the battle squadrons was locked inside. Our charts of the North Sea were veritable masses of minefields, reported or known to have been laid either by ourselves or by the enemy, so that it was no longer the open sheet of water in which the Fleet was free to cruise, but rather one in which it could move only with the utmost circumspection.

Submarines now troubled us less. For one thing, they had had no success against the Grand Fleet. For another, their energies seemed to have been diverted largely to attacks on merchantmen.

From time to time, strange and cumbrous devices fixed to ships' bows were tried for catching mines. Great wooden spars were rigged out with wire nets which it was supposed would catch and explode the mine comparatively harmlessly. But they were a dismal failure. In any sort of bad weather, the spars were smashed or swept away by the seas, and only constituted a danger to the vessel carrying

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them. In one case a minesweeping sloop fitted with this apparatus caught an enemy's mine. She towed it for some time, unable to get rid of it, and finally it exploded with disastrous results.

One day in April, I was sitting in my cabin reading the latest batch of Admiralty orders. Amongst them was a paper announcing that experiments carried out in the south showed that it was virtually impossible for a ship to hit a floating mine.

To enable the lay reader to understand what follows, let me make it quite clear that a floating mine is one floating on the surface without any attachment to the bottom. We never used this form of mine, but we had an idea that the Germans might, and, even if they did not deliberately do so, the moored mine frequently broke away from its moorings after it had been laid for some time, and thus became a floating mine.

The real danger was the moored mine—that is to say, a mine anchored to the bottom by a heavy sinker to which it was attached by a wire long enough to hold it down at a depth of anything from 10 to 30 feet below the surface. It carried projections called 'horns', and when it came in contact with a ship it would roll along her side or bottom till one of these was broken, and this would explode it. Thus the Admiralty announcement that a floating mine could not be hit did not apparently affect the main problem, for there was no doubt whatever that a moored mine could be hit.

I sat back and pondered, and an idea came into my head. From a casual reflection it grew and grew

until, in the course of a few minutes, I was convinced that I had the true solution of the mine problem within my grasp. It seemed almost fantastic that such a revelation should have been vouchsafed to me. It was so simple—so obvious and so utterly different from the lines on which everybody was now attacking the problem.

My thoughts ran thus. If a floating mine cannot be hit, it must mean that, being just a little lighter than an equal volume of water, the bow wave of a ship can sweep it aside just as it would sweep aside a similar parcel of water. Even if the mine were so situated that it ought to be struck by the very centre of the ship's ram, it seemed that the bow wave pushed it forward until it fell away to one side or the other, and after that, so one must infer, in some mysterious way, the parted waters through which the ship was thrusting kept it floating away from the ship's side until she had passed.

Of course—why not? It would need force to push it through the parted waters into the ship's side, and, since it was floating freely, there was no such force.

What about a moored mine? A moored mine was held down below the surface by a vertical wire, and was just as free as the floating mine to be carried to one side or the other by a movement of the water in which it lived. Surely, therefore, it would be swept aside by the bow wave of a ship whose ram was advancing towards it!

So far so good. The inference was that a ship could not hit a moored mine with her ram, but once

the mine had been deflected, the pull of its mooring wire, now no longer vertical, would begin to drag it in, and it would bump the ship further aft. Obviously! That explained why nearly all the ships which had been mined had been hit well aft, somewhere near their engine rooms, in the most vulnerable spot. The bow wave had pushed the mine out, and then, its force expended, the pull of the mooring wire had swung it back to the execution of its grim office.

Clearly, then, the force involved was small, and the movement slow, and something which could supplement the bow wave and push the mine out so far that it would not be swept back until the ship had passed, would do the trick. But what could that something be?

Already we had an apparatus known as a 'kite', used in minesweeping. It was a specially shaped wooden box, attached to a wire, which, when put in the water over the stern, on the ship moving forward would dive down towards the bottom almost vertically, and the faster the ship went ahead the more rigidly the kite would maintain its dived position. This apparatus had been in common use in every navy for years.

On the other hand, there was a well-known poacher's device known as the 'Otter', a piece of wooden board, suitably weighted and attached to a string. One walked along the edge of a lake, paying out string, and the board, keeping always on the surface, would shoot out into the middle. If one had taken the precaution to attach a gut line to the

'Otter' with half-a-dozen flies, one would be certain to catch a number of trout.

I had never seen this worked, but everybody knew about it. What I now wanted was something which would behave like an otter under water, for if I could attach two wires to the point of the ram, one each side, and make them stick out like whiskers at an angle of about 45 degrees to the fore-and-aft line, and make them stay there with the same fidelity as the minesweeping kite held its position, then they would be bound to take against the mooring wire of any mine which the ship encountered, always supposing that the mine did not hit the ram (and we now knew that it could not), and the mine would be swept out far away from the ship's side until it encountered whatever might be at the end of the whisker.

Some sort of cross between an otter and a kite was clearly required. Moreover, it must have a further function. When the mine reached it, either it must cut the mooring wire and so allow the mine to bob up harmlessly to the surface at one side of the ship, or else it must be so shaped and arranged that the mine would be allowed to slip over it and would then gradually swing back, but not in time to catch the ship.

I saw clearly that it would be useless to tell anyone about my system until I had evolved a body which would behave in the desired manner, and, puzzling over the dynamics of the thing, designed a model which could be altered at will as trial showed the necessity.

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It took a week or more of model building by the ship's carpenters and trial by myself from one of the picket boats to produce an Usborne kite, as I called it, which could tow steadily from the fore-foot,¹ and which was so shaped that the mooring wire of a mine would slip over it and release. In order to test this point I made a small dummy mine and moored it in a shallow place where the water was clear and still. Then, with my kite towing from the fore-foot of the picket boat like an attendant dolphin, we attacked the mine. I lay on my stomach and gazed into the water to watch the result, and sure enough, as the kite wire caught it, the mine was whisked outwards. There was a commotion as it reached the kite, and then, joy of joys, it had released itself and was rapidly drawing astern but well clear of our path. There was no doubt now, a solution of the mine bogey had been found. The rest was a matter of development.

At this stage, I ought certainly to have returned on board and reported developments to my captain, but instead I went straight on board the Fleet flag-ship *Iron Duke*, and, after explaining matters to the flag commander, reported my discovery to the Chief-of-Staff, Admiral Madden. Admiral Madden at once came out with me in the picket boat, and we watched the little kite perform. No matter how we turned or twisted, it remained always in the same relative position, steady as a rock.

Five minutes was enough for him, so we returned

¹ Fore-foot: The lowest point of the ram or stem.

to the *Iron Duke*, and presently the great Commander-in-Chief himself, with Admiral Madden, embarked with me for another demonstration. Together they gazed and gazed into the waters where my faithful kite was swimming. They said very little, but doubtless thought a great deal about the possibilities which the new system opened up. At last Sir John Jellicoe gave a sign and we returned to the flagship. He mounted the gangway and I followed. Standing on the quarter-deck to receive him was Captain Lionel Halsey.

Sir John Jellicoe was a man of speedy decisions. "What ships have we in dock?" he asked Captain Halsey, then Captain of the Fleet.

The latter replied that the *King Orry*, an armed merchant cruiser, was the only ship in dock at the moment, and Sir John immediately ordered a wire to be sent to fit towing bolts on her forefoot, and that all ships docking subsequently should have similar bolts fitted.

I was astounded. It seemed that not only was my principle accepted, but I was expected to produce the goods on a full-size scale for the whole Fleet without further ado. The resources of the repair ship *Cyclops* were placed at my disposal, and I was given a drifter¹ for experiments. I was told to get on with it and produce the full size article, and I returned to my ship not knowing whether I was standing on my head or my heels.

Then started a period of arduous development. The *Cyclops* built kites for me and I tried them

¹ Drifter: A small fishing steamer used as an auxiliary by the Fleet.

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against mines, towing them from drifters, sloops and destroyers, all of which were made available as if by magic on my request. This is not the place for technical details, but I soon found I needed two kites of my original pattern each side to protect a sloop and three to protect a battleship. Very soon I had a complete set ready, and a dummy mine-field laid in the Flow which the sloop *Daffodil* was to attack.

Captains and flag officers were invited to witness the test, and as we entered the minefield, whose mines were arranged just on the surface so that they might be seen, the fo'c'stle was crowded with officers of high rank gazing over the side, needless to say all extremely sceptical. Again and again we charged through the minefield, and though some of the mines came extremely close before they were finally whisked away by the kite wire, not one hit the ship. To my thinking the demonstration was a triumph, but it showed that the towing wire of the kite sagged a great deal owing to the pressure of the water, and allowed the mine very close to the bluff of the bow. Most of the captains were prepared to see themselves damned before they would go to sea with a contraption like that hanging round their bows, asking for trouble. Only Sir John Jellicoe and Admiral Madden had faith, and the development went on.

It would be wearisome to recount the long struggle to overcome the hundred difficulties which cropped up. One day in July, my squadron being at Invergordon, Lieutenant Burney came up by

train from the south, and Admiral Madden held a conference at which he and I were present. It appeared that Burney had been developing an underwater body which would thrust itself outwards and downwards when towed in exactly the same way as my kite, but Burney's idea was that it should carry an explosive charge for the purpose of destroying submarines. Two of these were to be towed from the stern of a destroyer, and constituted a kind of explosive rake with which to rake the waters for an enemy submarine, and when one was touched the charge exploded.

Burney claimed that his body could be easily adapted for my purpose, but he also stated that the idea of using the apparatus to protect ships against mines had been thought of by him, although he had taken no steps to develop it.

Sir Charles Madden took the best means for obtaining results. He told Burney to go on developing his apparatus as a mine protector in the south, while I was to continue independently with the resources of the Fleet in the north, and a committee of officers was appointed to test and report on the results of our respective efforts.

The subsequent story is a rather painful one to me. I had to combine my executive duties with those of development and of continual trials at sea. I had no scientist or expert of any kind to help me, and though the repair ship did her best her resources were limited. Eventually, on the *Colossus* becoming the flagship of Admiral Gaunt, and on Captain Pound becoming the Flag Captain, another com-

mander was appointed for executive duties, and I was borne as additional for experimental work.

This left me free to work at Invergordon, where a staff of carpenters and a couple of draughtsmen, as well as a drifter, had been allotted to me. Soon I had a complete set of kites ready for a battleship, and a device known as a sliding shoe for taking the point of tow down to the ram, as bolts had proved ineffectual, and a trial was carried out before the committee. Although it succeeded, one of the mines caught on a protruding bolt on a kite, and towed there, looking ugly and dangerous. The bolt should not have been there, and should not have been allowed to affect the trial. However, the committee was not satisfied, and told me to go on trying.

Then up came Burney with his apparatus, which he called a 'Paravane', and with a very effective cutter of his own invention, but he too was told to go back and try again.

Whatever the committee might think, I then knew beyond doubt that my apparatus, crude though it was and capable of improvement, would nevertheless take a battleship safely through a minefield.

Cut off as we were at Scapa Flow from the doings of the rest of the world, we had read with intense interest of the efforts to force the Dardanelles which had been going on since February of that year. Now the Navy had given up the attempt to reach Constantinople without the help of troops, the great landing at Gallipoli had taken place, and the struggle was at its climax. More than once it had

flashed across my mind that here in my hand lay the solution of the Dardanelles problem, for if the battleships out there were fitted with my apparatus the Dardanelles defences would be deprived of their sting. There would be nothing but the forts to oppose the passage of the ships. Yet, when the Grand Fleet who had seen it working would not accept it, how could I hope to persuade the Admiralty and the Admiral commanding in the Dardanelles? I put the thought away, telling myself that my first duty was to perfect the apparatus for the Grand Fleet.

At the Dardanelles, so far as we knew, there was no longer talk of rushing the Straits. The immediate object was to take the Gallipoli Peninsula, when the Straits would have fallen into our hands. I could not see my schemes receiving a welcome there, yet, had I only known it, Commodore Keyes, Admiral De Robeck's Chief-of-Staff, was passionately advocating that the Straits could and should be rushed by the Fleet, as that operation would bring Turkey to her knees. He stopped at nothing to bring about his object, visiting the Admiralty and the French Minister of Marine, yet he failed.

In his recently published book, he maintains vehemently that the operation would have been successful, pointing out that, after the battle of the 18th March, the Turks had practically no ammunition left for their heavy guns. He makes light of the casualties which the minefields would have produced, yet they must have been very heavy, perhaps heavy enough to wreck the daring operation, and

administer to us a check even more severe than we sustained on the 18th March, when one little mine-field of twenty mines sank three battleships and put a battle-cruiser out of action. Had Commodore Keyes only known that, up in the mists of Scapa, there existed a simple apparatus which ten to one would have taken his whole battle fleet safely through the minefield, I cannot doubt that he would have jumped at the unexpected help, and, using it as a potent argument, would have carried the day. Then I should have dashed out to Malta and started the dockyard on the work. After, say, three weeks of preparation, the deed could have been done, and, the British Fleet once in the Marmora, the Turkish army on Gallipoli must have surrendered, and Constantinople must have fallen.

What a glorious vista of possibilities! A much earlier end to the war, the destiny of nations changed!

But Keyes knew nothing of my humble efforts, and I nothing of his difficulties, and, although the Admiralty was vaguely aware of what I was doing, and might have made the happy suggestion of putting the Mediterranean command in touch with my work, they never did so. Alas for the things that might have been!

In my original proposals, I had suggested both alternatives as means of disposing of the mine—either to cut its mooring wire or to let it slip by, the latter system being known as deflecting. I had concentrated on the latter as the simpler, but now both Admiral Madden and the committee expressed

a preference for cutting the mooring rope and thus disposing of the mine for ever. So I too turned my attention to the cutting system, and, Burney's cutter being perfection, I adopted it on my kite by arrangement with him, and very soon applied for another trial from a battleship.

This time the trial was, as far as I could see, flawless. The apparatus was easy to handle, nothing seemed to upset it, and it disposed of the mines like cutting off the heads of poppies with a walking stick. But still the committee was not quite happy. A great responsibility devolved on them, for it was clear that, whatever else it might do, the apparatus would collect mines far out to one side or the other, which an unprotected ship would not have touched, and if there was the slightest doubt about its capacity to deal with them and render them harmless they might eventually swing in under the ship and explode, and thus the saviour would become the destroyer.

Meanwhile Burney, who had gathered round himself a staff of expert scientists, and had wrung from the Admiralty unheard-of freedom in the matter of placing contracts without reference to anybody, on the grounds of urgency, had perfected his paravane and placed an order for enough for the whole Grand Fleet.

His paravane was made of steel and had an automatic depth-keeping mechanism inside it. It looked a workmanlike apparatus, and when Burney brought it up for final trial the fact that he had pre-judged the issue was overlooked in the anxiety

to get an effective protection for the Fleet at the earliest possible moment.

My kite was made of a special wood. It was hollow, and contained a rubber bladder, which was inflated with air so that the kite would withstand the severe water pressure. It had no internal machinery, but relied on the inherent stability of its design for keeping its position, and it did so satisfactorily up to a speed of about 25 knots. All the faults in my system had been overcome, and many officers who had handled it and seen it at work preferred it to Burney's at the time when the final decision to adopt the paravane was made.

The plan of putting two officers in competition with one another instead of co-operation was unusual, but perhaps it was justified in the circumstances. Both of us had the interests of the Service at heart, and we accepted the position and exchanged information with friendliness and courtesy. Although naturally disappointed that the apparatus finally adopted was not of my design, and although I thought and still believe my design to have been in many respects superior, I would like to pay a tribute to the energy, initiative and inventive skill displayed by Lieutenant Burney. The only point of dispute between us was his claim to have forestalled me in the original idea, but this was not supported by the Royal Commission on Awards which sat to elucidate the point after the War. No written document could be produced in support of Burney's claim, nor did a single verbal witness testify to his having spoken of it. It was argued,

and I think accepted, that the mere passing of an idea through the mind does not establish a claim to it. One must do something about it, either tell some one or patent it, or proceed to develop it, and, evidence of such action being absent, there was nothing on which to support the claim.

When it was clear that the Fleet was prepared to adopt the paravane, I saw it would be nothing but waste of time for me to go on with my experiments, and I sought and obtained the Commander-in-Chief's permission to abandon them and apply for a command at sea. A small experimental unit, under Lieutenant Briscoe, R.N.V.R. (now a famous artist), was left at Invergordon to continue work on certain promising lines, and I handed over to Lieutenant Burney's establishment the results of my experimental work up to date.

Chapter Seven

JUTLAND

I WAS not present at the Battle of Jutland. At the time I happened to be working on kites at Invergordon, and, the *Colossus* being at Scapa Flow, I missed going to sea in her. This was a tragedy for me, but does not make any real difference to my title to talk about it, since nobody who was present, excepting the Admirals in command, saw much of it or knew at all clearly what was going on.

The fighting spread over an enormous area, and lasted from 3.45 p.m. on the 31st May, 1916, till about 3 o'clock the next morning, consisting largely of isolated engagements fought in mist, twilight, or darkness.

The battle has been written and argued about *ad nauseam*, and by persons far better qualified to judge of it than myself, and I am not going to attempt either to describe it in detail, or to criticise the action of the commanders. I might claim some right to express an opinion, since the result of a battle must depend upon two things—the effectiveness of the weapons you use, and the manner in which you use them. I had taken my share in the development of the weapons, as I have told, and after the War I founded and was for two years Director of the Naval Tactical School, thus having ample opportunity to consider the manner in which

they were used, that is to say, the Tactics of the battle.

I have been asked many times by all sorts and conditions of people, "What do you think of the Battle of Jutland?"

The question always fills me with dismay. I draw a deep breath, and try to think how I can convey, in a few words, my opinion on so great a matter, about which one might talk for days.

I reply, "The enemy fleet ventured out, hoping to catch and smash up a portion of our fleet. Instead, it met the whole of it, and, after half-an-hour's intermittent firing through the mist, it turned away, heavily punished, and, disappearing behind a smoke cloud, fled back into harbour. In brief, the German fleet only disputed our command of the sea for half-an-hour, and then resigned itself to being bottled up once more.

"But do you call it a victory?" asks my interlocutor.

"I most emphatically do," I reply. "The prisoner escaped, and Jellicoe locked him up again."

"But," persists my friend, "our losses were heavier than the German. That's a funny kind of victory."

I answer, "True, our losses were the heavier, but what of that? In chess, you may lose innumerable pieces, but provided you checkmate the king you are the winner."

He shakes his head, and murmurs, "Maybe you're right, but it wasn't like Nelson's victories."

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I have to admit the truth of this, but I point out that Nelson lived at the culmination of a long period of naval fighting, and tactics could be based on sure knowledge of what ships could or could not do. Everything had been tried out; nothing was left to chance. Jutland, on the other hand, was the first big engagement between modern ships, and everything was speculative. We neither knew how the Germans would fight, nor how our own ships would stand up to punishment; nor yet whether our system for distributing our fire amongst a number of enemy ships would stand the test of battle. These things had never been tried.

It is rare for a marksman to get a bull's eye with the first shot, and it would have been a miracle if Jellicoe had succeeded in destroying the whole German fleet, encountered, as they were, a brief two hours before nightfall. To me it was remarkable how nearly Lord Jellicoe foresaw the actual conditions of action, and trained his fleet to deal with them. Only a super-man could have foreseen everything.

In spite of the distance of his base, which handicapped him greatly, the German fleet was skilfully led into the trap, but it was too late in the afternoon, alas, to take full advantage of the opportunity that had been made. Jellicoe spread his ships around the head of the German fleet in a deployment so masterly that it is generally agreed now it would have been impossible to improve upon; hard even with a full knowledge of the movements of both forces, which, of course, he was far from having.

But Lord Jellicoe had not devised any means for compelling the enemy to remain within range, should he refuse action and turn away behind smoke! Nobody has yet done so, although, profiting by the experience of Jutland, an immense amount of thought has been given to the problem.

Lord Jellicoe refused to be hurried in closing in, and preferred to parry the enemy's torpedo attack by a slight turn away before doing so. Modern tactical thought, based on the experience of Jutland—mark!—considers that parry undesirable, and that the importance of coming quickly to close grips justifies the extra risk involved in the alternative parry of turning towards a torpedo attack. But Lord Jellicoe had not that experience to go upon. It is only since Jutland that it has been driven into the heads of tacticians that every moment is valuable, and not a second must be lost in closing in to effective range. In the light of our then experience, I doubt if anybody living or dead could have handled that situation better.

Then comes the night action. Jellicoe steered south to keep between the enemy and his base, and he placed his destroyer force astern, between himself and the enemy. Some commanders might have detached a light force to seek out and shadow the enemy during the night. Jellicoe did not, yet his instinct proved right, for the enemy battlefleet blundered right through our destroyers, and was attacked again and again.

Now occurred an omission which no one can

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defend. The Commander-in-Chief was not kept informed of what was going on in his rear, and he did not know it. Both the battleships in the rear of his line, one of which actually saw the German battleships, and many of his destroyers and attendant cruisers, might have kept him supplied with information, but they failed to do so. That error arose from inexperience, from never having fought a night action before. The light craft were intent upon the life-and-death business before them of slaying and being slain, and temporarily forgot the importance of feeding the Commander-in-Chief with information, while the battleships doubtless believed the Admiral was fully informed.

Although in the night the light craft sank a battleship, and torpedoed at least four more, they cannot be absolved from this fault. Jellicoe only knew vaguely that his destroyers had been in action, and, towards dawn, that the enemy was steering for the Horn's Reef. He mined the Horn's Reef channel, and so administered a final sting to the flying foe. Had he had proper intelligence of what was going on, he might have marshalled his forces and met the enemy at dawn, but, as it was, he chose not to do so.

Strategically, then, the Germans had been badly worsted, for they had had their opportunity of trying their much vaunted mettle against the Grand Fleet, and had failed to take it. They had been worsted tactically, too, though no one will deny them credit for the way in which Von Scheer extricated his fleet from the trap into which it had been

led. The Germans may legitimately claim some tactical advantage from the fact that they sent three British battle-cruisers to the bottom, themselves losing only one battle-cruiser and an old battleship.

We are compelled to ask ourselves, and I make no apology for dragging up so time-worn a subject, why our battle-cruisers behaved rather like balloons which go off 'pop!' at a pin-prick, and why the German ships seemed to suffer so little from the heavy punishment the Grand Fleet gave them.

The first question is easily answered. It was, in every case, a hit on or under a turret which blew up a battle-cruiser. This shows that their armour was not thick enough to keep out from these vital places the shells of an enemy of like class, and also that we had failed to realize how the flash of exploded cordite would find its way down through doors and round corners into the magazine, and so blow up the ship.

In his original conception of the battle-cruiser, Lord Fisher did not intend it to meet its like. It had, in fact, no like. It was something entirely new, embodying the idea of bringing an enormously superior force to bear on enemy cruisers; a sort of naval joke which would mop up the enemy's advanced forces and render him impotent. But the Germans had seen the joke, and had built their own battle-cruisers to counter ours, and better ones too.

Did Fisher foresee that his new type would be compelled to meet its like? I wonder.

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But we cannot put all the blame on Lord Fisher, for as soon as the Germans laid down their first battle-cruiser it became obvious that our own must be adequately armoured.

While our later types reflected this, the Germans always managed to get a little more out of a design than we did; their armour was a little thicker, their internal sub-division a little better. I think they beat us in the matter of design, and they held fast to the idea that, whatever else it might be, a ship must be strong enough to stand up to punishment in order to continue to fight. We often forgot that.

On the second point, that of flash penetrating the magazines, it must be said that we were truly unlucky. At the Battle of the Dogger Bank, the Germans became aware of the danger, as I have told. They learnt their lesson, and before Jutland had fitted special anti-flash arrangements to every ship. Knowing nothing of this, we continued to live in a fool's paradise, until the events of Jutland rudely awakened us.

It must have been terribly embarrassing for Sir David Beatty, during his fight with the enemy battle-cruisers, to see the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* blow up before his eyes, just when he was warming up to the battle. Here was something he did not understand; a new factor, which must be taken into account in his decisions. The sword with which he hoped to strike was bending in his hand. At those fateful moments, had he had time for reflection, what could he have thought of the naval

constructors and of the Admiralty, who had produced such spineless warships?

In reality, there had been no neglect. The designs had been arrived at after deep deliberation, and hundreds of earnest men had worn themselves out to produce them. The fear of spending too much on experiment was one of the basic causes. No neglect, only stupidity, and the constant squeeze of the Treasury to cut down the estimates to the last penny!

But the tale is not finished, for we must ask why the enemy ships stayed afloat so well, when we holed them with torpedoes, blew them up with mines, and hammered them with gunfire.

As to the torpedo, we have not so much to blame ourselves as to congratulate the Germans. They knew how to build ships which would stand up to them.

I have already pointed out that our mines were bad, and that this must be laid largely at the door of Lord Fisher, to whom, in spite of this, and one or two other mistakes, we owe nearly all good things in the modern Navy.

About gunfire there is a sad tale to tell, for gunfire was our pride. We knew how to hit, and hundreds of thousands of pounds had been spent on perfecting our projectiles. But at Jutland, while the German shell penetrated our ships' sides and burst well within them, our own had a way of exploding instantaneously as they touched the enemy's side, and so frequently doing no appreciable damage at all. Yet our Ordnance Committee, a group of

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highly technical sailors and soldiers, had been thrashing out this question for years. There had merely been a mistake, yes, a sad mistake, and one which perhaps alone deprived us of that smashing victory which our people had the right to expect, and which the handling of the Fleet undoubtedly deserved.

The design of our shell was based on 'normal impact', that is to say, everything functioned correctly when the shell struck the plate at right-angles, or nearly so. It was argued that the shell which did best at 'normal impact' would also do best at 'oblique impact', but this assumption had never been tested; it was taken on trust. The long range at which Jutland was fought produced very oblique impact in nearly every case, because the shell were dropping at a fairly steep angle when they hit. It seems that the sideways blow on the shoulder of the shell shattered it, exposing the explosive within, which promptly blew up. Fortunately, this did not happen in every case, but it happened often enough to deprive us of the full result of our very effective shooting.

I fear we must blame British stupidity for this also—stupidity in not probing in every direction round so vital an assumption; stupidity in grudging money for experiment. A million spent on this in pre-war days might have saved us a hundred, or even a thousand million later, and who can say how many priceless lives?

When all these points are considered, it is really remarkable that nothing worse befell us. When the

two battle fleets were at last strung out opposite one another in that fateful half-hour for which Sir Percy Scott and many another had lived and died, what if the Germans had been able to hit us as we were hitting them? Would our battleships have stood up to it, or would there have been ghastly denouements as in the case of the battle-cruisers? No one knows, for the fact is that, for one reason or another, the Germans hardly hit our ships at all. They seem to have been not only dumbfounded at the encounter, but paralysed by our fire, which smothered their ships whenever they were visible.

It is permissible to assume, however, that blow-ups would have been few; for at all events we can point to the fact that, in the early part of the action, when Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas, with his four battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class, so gallantly supported Sir David Beatty, his ships alone withstood the fire of the whole van of the enemy battle fleet as well as that of the battle-cruisers for a full half-hour, during which they rendered a very good account of themselves, which was only marred by the defect in our projectiles to which I have already alluded.

These facts which I have outlined, and many more, soon emerged from the study of the battle, and urgent and effective steps were at once taken to remedy them. Had the Germans risked an encounter with our Fleet six months later, our ships would not have gone off like squibs, nor would our projectiles have burst harmlessly on the enemy's

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sides. But in spite of all our faults, all our stupidities, and all our defects, that one glorious half-hour had given to the enemy such a wholesome respect for British tactics and British gunnery that he mutinied sooner than face it again.

To the world, and to Britain in particular, Jutland was what they were told it was. Accustomed to hear of victory after victory, and never of defeat, on the land front, though the casualty lists told another tale, what can have been the feelings of Britons on reading, on the 3rd June, in the morning papers, the following shattering announcement:—

The Times, 3rd June, 1916.

June 2nd, 7 p.m.

The Secretary of the Admiralty makes the following announcement:

In the afternoon of Wednesday, May 31st, a naval engagement took place off the coast of Jutland.

The British ships on which the brunt of the fighting fell were the Battle Cruiser Fleet and some cruisers and light cruisers, supported by four battleships. Among these the losses were heavy.

The German battlefleet, aided by low visibility, avoided prolonged action with our main forces, and soon after these appeared on the scene the enemy returned to port, though not before receiving severe damage from our battleships.

The battle-cruisers *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, *Invincible*, and the cruisers *Defence* and *Black Prince* were sunk. The *Warrior* was disabled, and after being towed for some time had to be abandoned by her crew.

It is also known that the destroyers *Tipperary*, *Turbulent*, *Fortune*, *Sparrowhawk* and *Ardent* were

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lost, and six others are not yet accounted for. No British battleships or light cruisers were sunk.

The enemy's losses were serious. At least one battle-cruiser was destroyed, and one severely damaged; one battleship reported sunk by our destroyers during a night attack; two light cruisers were disabled, and probably sunk. The exact number of enemy destroyers disposed of during the action cannot be ascertained with any certainty, but it must have been large.

That was the morose account which was broadcast to the world. Can it be wondered at that a great black cloud of depression settled over England, and, indeed, over all the allied countries? And when one remembers that the Germans suppressed most of their casualties, and announced a great victory, claiming the battleship *Warspite* as well as the ships we had announced as lost, is it surprising that they were believed?

Would it not have been better to claim the victory we had undoubtedly achieved, making much of the fact that the Germans had fled incontinently, and then to have published the casualties by degrees?

At all events, nothing could have been worse than the way we did announce the result of this battle. It was the false view which the announcement engendered, and not the true result of the battle itself, which shook the confidence of the Nation in its Navy, and from that shaking the Navy has not yet, in my opinion, fully recovered. A Nelsonian victory is needed to put it back where it was in the public estimation before 1916.

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Yet, in spite of its mistakes, in gallantry and in fighting efficiency it was probably far ahead of its standard at any previous period of history, and, moreover, it most assuredly had achieved its purpose.

Chapter Eight

TRANSITION

MY work on paravanes was over. The British Fleet was now in a fair way to being equipped and rendered immune against the mine. So, also, were the merchantmen of the Allied forces.

In the process I had lost my ship and missed the only encounter between the Grand Fleet and the enemy. But I had in my pocket a strong letter of recommendation from Sir John Jellicoe, and, feeling somewhat in the air, due to having no glimmering of what the future might have in store, I approached the swarming, crowded Admiralty buildings.

What varied feelings are experienced on entering this many-faced abode of dockets and red tape! When holding some appointment there you stride in as if the place belonged to you. The smell of old paper and hot radiators is good in the nostrils. Every one is friendly, co-operative, and helpful. Messengers abound to do your bidding. Papers arrive on your desk, are dealt with, and disappear. You are the chosen vessel, holding many secrets. The Navy takes great steps forward, and you are, in part at least, the impetus behind her progress. Always providing you do not attempt to hurry the machine it works smoothly and satisfactorily.

How different when you enter as a supplicant! The place is strangely changed. Suspicious mes-

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sengers look at you curiously; books have to be signed and papers filled in, stating your name and business. The waiting-rooms are inhospitable to a degree, and every one is always too busy to see the visitor at once.

“Hullo, So-and-So! What do you want, and where have you sprung from?” is the greeting from some old acquaintance who, without hat or overcoat and therefore clearly belonging, is strolling down the corridor to have a word with perhaps the very person you are waiting to see.

The Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord was polite and friendly. Sir John’s recommendation could not, of course, be ignored, but of independent commands for commanders in the North Sea there were none available. The cruiser *Blonde* had just been filled up Of course, if I liked to wait, a cruiser might become available, but there was nothing at the moment, and commanders’ commands were few. Then, let us see—abroad? Ah, yes, the S.N.O. Basra¹—how would you like that?

The S.N.O. Basra! I reflected, dragging my thoughts away from a cruiser in the North Sea, on which my imagination had been fixed, to date palms in far Arabia. One was, in those days, terribly ignorant of what was going on in every other field of the War than one’s own, and all I could see was a vision of store houses and palm trees under a hot tropical sun. It sounded deadly, and the Naval Assistant did not seem to think much

¹ S.N.O.: Senior Naval Officer. Basra is at the head of the Persian Gulf.

more of it himself—in fact, had proffered it so apologetically that I felt instinctively it was a ‘wrong ’un’. As it turned out, it would have been a magnificent appointment, bringing the command of all the gunboats which supported our armies on the Tigris in the advance on Bagdad. But one cannot see into the future, and at the time it seemed to me too far out of the War.

Then, the Naval Assistant continued, there was one other job vacant almost at once as it happened, the only cruiser which was a commander’s command in the Eastern Mediterranean, so recently the scene of the great Dardanelles expedition—H.M.S. *Latona*.

Inquiry revealed that the *Latona* was a mine-layer. She seemed to offer promise of adventure, and, although she was an old ship, I thought there were sure to be new operations against the Turks. It was rather ironical that I, who had just spent eighteen months fighting the mine peril, should now be offered a chance of dealing the very death I had been combating. But what did it matter? A sea-going command in the Mediterranean was a prize, and I accepted it gladly, leaving the Admiralty in the happy knowledge that within a few days I should be sailing for Malta, the junction through which all travellers destined for service in the Mediterranean had to pass. Under the system then in force it was not the business of the Transport Service to inquire where the *Latona* might be, and whether one could not be sent to her direct. No, that would be too complicated, and in war time

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liable to give away information. The ship was in the Mediterranean command. That was enough. One must go to Malta, and there they would know where and how to send one on. I sailed in the *Kaisar-i-Hind*.

Chapter Nine

MALTA

IN those days, the submarine menace was not taken seriously in the Mediterranean. Although our vessel was an important P. & O., she was sailing without any escort. The captain was intensely anxious, and passengers were co-opted to keep watch for submarines. But we met none, and arrived eventually at sunny Malta.

It was like another world. The gliding *dgaisahs*, with their high Venetian prows; the clamouring boatmen whose lives seemed to be a perpetual quarrel; the fortress-crowned harbour with its ramparts of yellow stone, now no longer inhabited by battleships, but packed with merchantmen, sloops, trawlers, and a few destroyers! You land at the Custom House, rather dark and shady, saved from the beating sun by the towering walls of Valetta. You mount the street of many steps, passing a goat-herd milking his pink-bellied charges on a doorstep, while an olive-skinned woman, gliding by in a flowing black faldetta, gives a quick, sidelong glance, then looks demurely before her. A school of young priests in violet robes and plumed medieval hats troops past. There, projecting from a wall, is 'Nelson's Hook', the very piece of iron through which young officers of his day are supposed to have wriggled themselves for luck, and to bring promotion.

At last you have reached the top. You have been in the shade, sheltered by the tall houses, but now the hot sun bursts upon you. It is as though you had stepped into a Turkish bath, and at this moment the chimes of St. John's Cathedral, just in front, fill the air with sound, while half-a-dozen other churches join in the riotous medley.

The hot air is odorous of goat, and aniseed, and baking, and a hundred other scents. White uniforms and khaki are everywhere about. Undoubtedly you have arrived at glamorous, sense-satisfying, never-to-be-forgotten Malta.

Here, then, I rested a night, and, still in search of H.M.S. *Latona*, fared on next day to Mudros, the base of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron.

I travelled by the steamship *Osmanieh*, which in pre-war days plied between Constantinople and Alexandria, and was later to find a watery grave at the cost of one German torpedo. Being the senior officer present, I occupied the Royal suite.

Mudros harbour was a strange sight. Dominated by the battleships *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*, it was packed with repair ships, ammunition ships, seaplane carriers, half-a-dozen colliers and store ships, a distilling ship, as well as several large yachts and countless other craft—and this despite the fact that the Dardanelles expedition was all over and done with. What must it have been like a year earlier!

Not far off lay my future command, looking sprightly and smart in the morning sun, with tall grey funnels and masts raking back at a pleasant

angle, while a deck-house, built on the poop to accommodate the captain now that his old quarters had been filled with mine rails, gave her a yacht-like appearance.

The previous captain, Commander Arnold-Forster, had already left, and I was received by Lieutenant-Commander P. H. Mackenzie, my First Lieutenant, whose able and efficient work helped me greatly in the eighteen months that followed.

My official calls on the Vice-Admiral Commanding, Admiral Thursby, and his Chief-of-Staff, Commodore FitzMaurice, informed me of my future duties. I was to sail that night for Port Laki, in the Island of Leros, there to command a section of the blockade being enforced against the Turks in Anatolia.¹ There was no mine-laying for the present, so I gathered, but mines had to be kept on board ready for use at short notice. In the meantime, the *Latona* was to act as a cruiser, and instead of lying idly waiting to lay mines, had active duties to perform.

The Eastern Mediterranean was a wondrous command—a sort of confederacy of semi-independent nabobs, each of whom had some special duty to perform, and each designated by a grand and resounding title.

There was the ²S.N.O. Salonika, who supported the army and commanded the Third Detached Squadron. A little to the eastward another nabob, the S.N.O. Stavros, commanded a cruiser of the *Theseus* class and some minor vessels. His job was

¹Anatolia: alias Asia Minor.

²Senior Naval Officer.

to protect the right flank of the Salonika army and to harry the left flank of the Bulgarians by shell fire.

Then came the S.O. Second Detached Squadron, watching the Dardanelles, and ready to take effective measures to shadow the *Goeben*, the one warship which might upset our appletcart, in the event of a sortie.

Working down the coast in the same direction, we next came to the S.O. Fourth Detached Squadron, based on Mitylene. This officer commanded a large and varied flotilla, and blockaded the Anatolian coast as far south as Samos.

Further south was the S.O. First Detached Squadron, who, based on Crete, was responsible for the lower part of Anatolia, as well as for convoy and anti-submarine work over a large area. My immediate job was blockade duty under him.

Working north again on the Grecian side, we had the S.N.O. Salamis, commanding quite a force of old battleships in Salamis Bay, in co-operation with a senior French Admiral. This mixed force was intended to bring pressure on neutral Greece, so that she should not enter the lists against us, but, if she fought at all, should do so on the side of the Allies.

All these were under the Vice-Admiral Eastern Mediterranean Squadron, who flew his flag in the *Lord Nelson*. She and the *Agamemnon* were based at Mudros for the sole purpose of engaging the *Goeben* or any of the Turkish fleet which might emerge.

Chapter Ten

PORT LAKI

OFF the south-western part of Asia Minor, a few miles from the mainland, there spread a group of islands, from Patmos in the north to Rhodes in the south, which had been ceded by Turkey to Italy after the war of 1911. Their population and sympathies were purely Greek, but they were ruled by the Italian Governor-General of Rhodes, under whom each island was administered by a military governor.

The Greeks regarded their Italian masters with phlegmatic dislike, consoling themselves only by the thought that their predecessors, the Turks, had been worse. To the British they were inclined to be friendly, probably in the hope of favours to come. Doubtless they were ready to make profit if they could by 'running' the blockade, but we flattered ourselves our watch was so good that they had decided trading with the mainland was not worth while.

As for the Turks, any craft that they may have possessed had long since been hauled up and hidden under brushwood, for periodically the destroyers of my new command searched the coast, and by shell-fire disposed of any boats or sailing vessels which were visible. Still there was an astonishing amount of sailing boat traffic between the islands, and this had to be scrupulously overhauled, a task which

kept our patrols busy. To make the blockade even more effective, a series of raids had been carried out before my arrival, with the object of seizing Turkish cattle. These somewhat piratical affairs had caused the liveliest entertainment.

A number of R.N.V.R.¹ officers were serving in the Eastern Mediterranean on account of their special knowledge of Greek. Amongst them, Professor J. L. Myres, by his tremendous energy and ability, gained great renown.

The Admiral had ordered that British sailors were not to be landed for cattle raiding, since the military gain did not justify risking men so hard to replace. The Professor then raised a troop of Anatolian irregulars especially for the purpose. They were fierce fellows, to whom bloodshed and rapine were second nature, and so, for their proper disciplining, he stationed them on an uninhabited island some little distance from Leros. It had no water, and the regulation of its supply kept them well under control. I inspected them when, soon after taking over, the Professor proudly displayed them, and a sorry-looking lot of bravos they were.

The last raid before my arrival had been a little unfortunate. Numerous cattle had been brought off, as well as one or two local Greeks who sought refuge from the Turks. But another English Professor who lived in Samos claimed that the cattle were his, and had been taken from his farm in Anatolia, which the necessities of war had caused him to abandon. Professor Myres denied this, and

¹ R.N.V.R. Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

a troublesome case ensued which was not easy to settle, for the cattle had already been sold in the island at knock-out prices.

Whether from this cause, or because Admiral Thursby disliked these raids, instituted by his predecessor, I do not know, but an order went forth to discontinue them, and Port Laki, from being the centre of hilarious escapades, now settled down to an oppressive quietude.

Leros was then an attractive island covered with olives and oranges, with high land at its centre, crowned by a typical white Greek town, which shone like a jewel when the sun's rays caught it.

In the capital reigned the Italian Governor, in his pale blue uniform. On my first visit I surprised him in the streets, a bag of sweets in his hand, seeking popularity by offering them to the children. He was a good fellow, anxious to co-operate. He was even amiable enough to sacrifice a beauteous pair of sky-blue uniform trousers, taking part in after-dinner 'cock fighting' in the *Latona's* wardroom. This form of sport involves sitting on the floor with knees well tucked up, held back by a walking stick, and endeavouring to tip over with the toes an opponent similarly trussed up. It is a peculiarly British form of 'rag', and it speaks well for the Italian Governor's politeness that he submitted to it.

The Italians could never quite swallow our temporary R.N.V.R. officers, one of whom resided in each island for intelligence duties. They knew they were not regular officers, and suspected them of

working secretly against Italy, while the intelligence officers were convinced that the Italian authorities were in league with the Turks to scotch our operations. My hardest task was to keep peace while maintaining the intelligence service.

Taken all in all, it was a pleasant life. In Leros the means of transport was donkey-back, and there were a number of little bays, sites for guns and so on to be inspected. Port Laki was a perfect harbour, deep and well protected against gales, though a submarine could have entered it at any time. We guarded against this by a net at the entrance, which looked formidable enough, but which any submarine could have walked through without the slightest difficulty, had it made the attempt.

At the south side of the harbour stood the palace of the old Turkish Pasha, the one-time Governor, and on a quiet evening I used to land and wander in his garden amidst the fig trees, the magnolias and the orange trees, breathing the sweet, indolent atmosphere of a vanished power.

Each island had to be visited and the Governor called upon; each deep bay of the indented enemy coastline to be explored, and sometimes, when reports indicated that a submarine might be near, traps were laid to catch him on the surface at night.

From time to time the diligent Professor Myres, Chief of our Intelligence Service, who had been allotted a small tug in which to prosecute his inquiries, would arrive, bright-eyed and half-starved, often with a report of some nefarious plot in the brewing. His ardour was so great that he never took

any care of himself. The food in his little craft was probably quite inedible, and the kindest thing one could do was to give him a good square meal, a bath, and a day or two's rest. So unremitting was his activity that it exceeded the capacity of his tug, whose boiler, one fine day, gave up the unequal contest and blew up. For the moment the Professor was laid by the heels, but it was not long before he had got going again, having obtained from me the use of a trawler.

So great a mind bent upon so small a task! One felt really sorry there was no greater to give him, for the fact was that under the joint dominion of the British and Italians the Greeks could not be up to much mischief, and the Turks, misliking our gun muzzles, kept as quiet as they could. But whatever plots, counter-plots or nefarious projects were hatched, whether Greek, Italian or Turkish, the Professor had wind of them, and, as likely as not, of a good many that had no real existence.

Chapter Eleven

THE DARDANELLES PATROL

IN this world, paradise is usually taken only in small doses! It was not long before the *Latona* was recalled to Mudros to take charge of the Dardanelles Patrol, and at the same time to carry out some experiments to enable us to lay mines in deeper waters than had hitherto been possible.

On the 1st December 1916, my ship anchored in Kephalo Bay, in the Island of Imbros, with the entrance to the Dardanelles in sight some ten miles distant. Here I took over the command from Captain Macrorie, whose ship, the *Theseus*, was due at Malta for refit.

A grey stretch of sea, stormy as often as not; a patrol of destroyers, two by day, four by night, a trawler or two and some motor launches; a submarine at Kephalo ready for instant action should the *Goeben* emerge. At Tenedos Island to the south, a small garrison, and at Rabbit Island, in the very mouth of the Straits, a tiny look-out patrol living in dug-outs, for the island was often under fire. At Imbros, quite a sizeable garrison to repel possible raids, and a squadron of R.N.A.S.¹ housed in aeroplane cases and possessing a dozen or so of old machines. Such was the Dardanelles Patrol, and it rested neither by day nor by night.

The *Latona*, when not at sea experimenting, was

¹ R.N.A.S. Royal Naval Air Service.

at short notice for steam, and morning and evening an aeroplane flew over the Dardanelles, searching them for suspicious movements. Sometimes our planes did a little bombing on the lines of communication in Bulgaria, at others they raided the Turkish aerodromes. Raids of this kind, like official calls, were punctiliously returned within twenty-four hours, and to have failed in paying such a return visit would have been held as a matter for shame.

Day followed day with changeless monotony. The Turks shelled our patrols, we shelled them in return. One day the *Latona* took a hand and let them taste her 4.7's, but the answering 6-inch were too near her mine-covered decks to encourage a frequent repetition of this pastime.

Many months before, a minefield had been laid outside the Dardanelles, but we expected that in the succession of gales which had followed one another since it was laid, much of it had vanished. Desirous of reconnoitring these mines, I requested the R.N.A.S. commander to notify me when the water was right and a plane available. In order to see mines under water one must fly very low, and there must be scarcely more than a ripple on the sea.

Soon after these instructions came a lively day. A bridge in Bulgaria had to be destroyed and our bombing planes, accompanied by fighters, were going off at dawn. My destroyers were strung out along the route to succour lame ducks on the homeward journey. All went well, and they were coming

back, when a message came from the aerodrome that the sea was right and a plane available for reconnoitring the minefield.

I landed at once and took my place in the machine. Soon we were circling over the position of the minefield, at a height of about 500 feet, and peering into the water for sight of the pale round shadows which would tell us our mines were still there. With unerring skill the pilot flew over line after line, and we counted the missing ones, which indeed were not many, though quite a number were on the surface and valueless. When over the inner lines he attracted my attention by a thump on the back, and pointed to white puffs in the sky, not far from us. The Turks had spotted our machine and were firing, but so wide was their fire that it seemed hard to believe it was aimed at us, and we continued our reconnoitring, finally turning for home.

There came another thump on the back. This time it was black puffs, and a good deal closer. It seemed all in the day's work, and, since we were going home, I saw no reason for agitation. But the pilot was troubled, and gesticulated vaguely towards the sea, speech of course being impossible. At last, as some shrapnel balls went through our tail, I realized he was trying to tell me that our own destroyers had got us under fire. I waved my hand, pointing towards Tenedos, intending to indicate that we should climb and get right away from them, returning home by a circuitous route. The pilot, however, would have none of it.

An aeroplane is no place for an argument, especi-

ally when under fire. He was the pilot, and knew what he was doing. I did not. For all I knew, the petrol might not last out the longer journey I contemplated, and I let him have his way, which was to swing round and fly straight towards the destroyer who was attacking us, to enable her to see our British marks.

Aboard the peccant destroyer, all was delighted excitement. They had seen the plane coming out from the Straits, flying low, obviously an enemy up to some mischief. In vain her consort, another destroyer coming up astern, had signalled, "I think she is ours."

"No," replied the peccant one, "she is my bird."

His bird she surely was. The plane flew closer and closer, until we could look down the muzzle of her 4" bow gun, when none but a blind man could have failed to see the British marks. But he in the lust of battle was blind; a final shrapnel burst put a few more balls through us, and, tilting up our tail, landed us greenly in the Mediterranean.

Both S.N.O. and pilot felt extremely blue as, clambering out of their seats in the still floating plane, they broke the little lead flasks in their life belts and blew them out ready for a swim.

The worst was yet to come, for though the shrapnel had ceased from troubling, a maxim gun still played upon us, and why neither of us was hit remains a mystery to this day.

No remedy occurred to me, but the pilot was more resourceful. Up went his hands, and I am sure that he would have cried 'Kamerad' had

the destroyer been near enough to hear him. It was a brilliant idea. My hands went up too, and the S.N.O. surrendered to his patrol destroyer.

Our gesture stopped the firing, and by this time somebody must have seen our marks, for when a boat, launched to take possession of the 'prisoners', had brought us aboard, all was contrition and apology. Old Man Sun, the giver of all good things, was of course made the scapegoat.

"The sun was straight in my eyes, sir. Impossible to see the marks," and so on.

Sun? No. My eye? Certainly. Or, in other words, the excuse was "all my eye and Betty Martin," as sailors say. The fact was that, once they had got the plane, which they fully believed to be the enemy, well under fire, no power on earth could deflect them from the business of bringing her down. There was some excuse, for I had not warned the patrol destroyers beforehand of the reconnaissance, and since there were no casualties no fuss was made.

I wonder if the Turks witnessed the incident, and, if so, whether they laughed. One hopes they enjoyed it.

However, the activities of the Turkish guns caused me to ask for a monitor to reply to them, and, on this being sent, the *Latona* was withdrawn to other spheres.

The Chief-of-Staff wrote in a private letter :

"We are using you rather as a 'handy billy', but you are getting a fine experience of the station, and will soon become a professional locum tenens.

BLAST AND COUNTERBLAST

"The V.A. was very pleased with your energetic action at Kephalo, but was only afraid you might get blown up in *Latona*. Your report on the minefield is most valuable and interesting, and I'm glad you escaped."

Chapter Twelve

SYRA

WHEN one sails the Grecian Archipelago, there is a certain time, about half-an-hour after dawn, when the shafts of daylight, striking horizontally across the pale blue sky, show up the islands at fantastic distances at which they would be invisible in the full light of day. It transforms them into dark, cone-shaped masses, which dot the horizon like cardboard triangles against a luminous backcloth. These triangles have a peculiarity which has always intrigued me. Their corners, through some mirage effect, are turned up, so that they have the appearance of resting upon the water with the central part of their bases, whilst their extremities slope gently up towards the sky. It is as if they were floating upon the sea.

Having had many occasions to remark this phenomenon, when I first heard the story of Latona, and the sad passes to which she came, the legend woke a chord in my memory, so that I saw how, some thousands of years before, it had arisen.

It was, I think, in Lesbos that the fair goddess Latona, yielding to the ardent fires of Zeus, incurred the wrath of jealous Hera. Hera cursed her, banishing her from the known world, declaring that on no fixed land should she give birth to the faithless Zeus's child. Poor Latona wandered hither and thither, and at last, when the time was nigh, she

found a floating island. Possibly Zeus had been able to snatch a few moments from his current amours to help her in her exploration. At all events, the floating island of Delos was found, and no sooner were earth and heaven aware of the great event which pended there than they must needs do honour to this mother of pagan gods. The more conveniently placed of the islands gathered round and encircled Delos with a rocky ring, thus affording Latona the privacy a goddess would desire.

Henceforth these islands were named the Cyclades. There, under fleecy clouds and a powdery sky, to the tune of the lapping wavelets, with islands as witnesses, were born those mighty deities of the ancient world, Apollo and Diana. When Zeus, looking down upon affairs, saw how well they had turned out, and how ineffectual had been Hera's curse, he bethought him to make the job complete by fixing Delos down. Pluto got the royal command, and, contriving great screwed pillars from the bottom of the sea, worked them up through Delos till he had made that holy island solid with the earth itself. Thenceforth it became the centre of Greek religion.

Thus it was not unfitting that my *Latona* should find herself at Syra, the capital of the Cyclades. My duty was the naval administration of the surrounding region, including Delos, as circumstances might dictate.

It was a peculiar piece of history which had led to the present situation, and one we could well have dispensed with. Sir Basil Thomson has described

it, likewise Mr. Compton Mackenzie, and the briefest summary will serve my purpose.

Some will remember that towards the end of 1914 Turkey was added to the list of our enemies. The Greek nation offered to help us against her hereditary foe, but we refused that help, for the price was too high—nothing less, in fact, than Greek sovereignty at Constantinople, a tantalizing vision to Greek eyes, conjuring before them the glories of the old Byzantine Empire.

From the date of that refusal, Greece, under King Constantine, had maintained a difficult neutrality. The King, with his Queen, the Kaiser's sister, was in closest touch with the German royal family, and if ever a royal marriage might be expected to harvest political results, this one should do so now. So Germany must have thought, and nothing was spared to bring pressure on the King to act in her interests. But Constantine, as King of the Hellenes, determined to act in the interests of Greece.

The difficulty was to find where these interests lay. There was great Germany, smashing down resistance on every side. How could she fail to win? Serbia had been swept away, and now Rumania, when she dared to lift her sword arm, had melted like ice under sunshine and become a part of Germany. Yet all around Greek shores, and indeed everywhere else where seas were salt and blue, Britain's power was sucking at Germany's life-blood.

The arrogant British had long since calmly

occupied his isle of Mudros as a base for their operations against the Turks, and Greece, pleading *force majeure*, but only too pleased to think the Turks were going to get so hard a knock, had yielded with a shrug.

The precedent once established, far worse was to follow. Crete, Imbros, Samos, and Mitylene had all become British naval bases, and Milo a French one. An Allied fleet rode at Salamis, whereas international law requires that the warships of the belligerents shall only enter neutral ports in cases of necessity, or to obtain sufficient fuel to reach the next port, and shall leave within twenty-four hours. Worse still, having failed to give the knock-out blow to Turkey, the British and French had calmly landed their armies at Salonika in Greek territory, and proceeded to operate from there.

Surely, thought Royalist Greece, she had done enough for the Allies, and in the event of Germany's winning the war, it would be none too easy for Constantine to account for his actions to his mighty brother-in-law.

There was in Greece, however, a Cretan patriot, whose eyes saw clearer visions. Mr. Venizelos had that quality of greatness which enabled him to forecast events and to believe passionately in his forecasts. Like Constantine, he thought only of Greece's future, and he was sure, with an unfaltering conviction, that England could not lose this War, and that for Greece to embrace England, casting in her lot with her for good or ill, would be her one salvation, causing her to emerge at last, shaken

perhaps, but once more endowed with the pomp and power of Byzantium.

Constantine was wise and cautious, perhaps a little 'pawky'; Venizelos had the greatness to risk all on his conviction that England must prevail. Which of them was right? We know that Venizelos finally had his way, yet in the aftermath, when Greece sought to give the *coup de grâce* to Turkey, we raised no finger to help, and so she tumbled through disaster after disaster into the slough of bankruptcy, where still she wallows.

Supposing Greece had remained neutral to the end, had been satisfied to hold what she had, and keep friends with all parties, where would she be now? There can be little doubt that, with credit unimpaired, and without the necessity for contracting those large loans which helped to encompass her ruin, she would command the same financial respect as do Switzerland and Holland. Yes, despite one's admiration for the courage of the man who risked a kingdom at a throw, despite one's gratitude and affection for a group of men who threw in their lot with ours and fought side by side with us for a cause which was not theirs, one is forced to conclude, in the light of present-day results, that Constantine's policy was the wiser. Or is there some more distant, more settled effect, which in the far future will tell posterity that Venizelos' courageous acts, involving even rebellion against his King, made for the ultimate happiness of the Hellenes?

At the time of which I write, December 1916, Greece was in a turmoil. Venizelos, impatient of

restraint, had taken himself off to Salonika, where he had declared a provisional government and formed a Greek army to fight by the side of the Allies. Crete and Samos in particular supported him, and Mitylene became a depôt for his army, but neither the Allies nor Germany was satisfied with this state of affairs.

Baron Schenck, the unscrupulous German agent in Athens, intrigued and schemed for Germany's advantage. De Roquefeuille, his French counterpart, stuck at nothing to outwit him. These semi-secret political agents acquired such power as to be terribly dangerous. They had power without responsibility, had access to the private ears of persons in authority, could instigate this policy or that as the fancy moved, and then, since to deny one's accomplices is part of the grammar of the secret services, all responsibility could so easily be disavowed.

De Roquefeuille, working for full Greek participation in the War on the Allies' side, was constantly discovering perfidies not in accord with the promises and fair words of the King, who was trying his hardest to please both sides. The Greek reservists were being mobilised against us! It was essential to take control of communications in Greece, since the necessities of war could not permit the Allies to get into a position where they might find new enemies behind them at Salonika!

By such arguments, De Roquefeuille in all probability pressed the French Admiral D'Artige de Fournet at Salamis Bay a good deal further than he

wished to go. Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler, commanding the British forces, was acting in support of the French Admiral, while in Athens itself we had Compton Mackenzie, the author, as our counterpart of Schenck and De Roquefeuille.

Matters had come to a head owing to the surrender by Greece to the Bulgars of Fort Roupell. The Allies claimed that this was an un-neutral act, and to atone for it Greece should do something favourable to the Allies' cause, the particular thing decided upon being the cession of a few batteries of field guns. Admiral D'Artige de Fournet had gone to Salamis Bay to settle the matter, which seemed too much for the Allied diplomatists, all in disagreement one with another, and all urged to violent action by De Roquefeuille and Compton Mackenzie.

At length, so the story goes, the King told the Admiral that, while he was personally quite willing to cede the guns, the people would not allow it. If, however, the Allies would make a demonstration of force by occupying certain points in Athens, all would then be well, and he assured him there would be no resistance. The Admiral agreed, and himself landed with the occupation parties. Believing in the King's guarantee, he had not taken very serious military precautions. Whilst the men were fallen out, with their arms piled, having dinner, fire was suddenly opened upon them from hidden positions. A number were killed, and the majority, including the Admiral himself, were surrounded and taken prisoner.

No instructions for reprisals had been given, and the Chief-of-Staff and the Rear-Admiral, faced by the surprising fact that their Commander-in-Chief was a prisoner, and that rioting and massacre were going on in Athens, decided to retaliate by bombardment. But the distance was great, and a considerable time elapsed before a French battleship had been got into position and heeled over sufficiently to enable her gunfire to reach Athens. At last she started indirect fire, aimed at the royal palace, and, as luck would have it, the third shot was a direct hit.

As a result, the Admiral was released, the force withdrawn, and the hasty evacuation of the British and French legations, as well as the majority of British and French subjects, followed. In the two succeeding days there was a hunting out and a massacre of Venizelists by Royalist Greeks, and many influential merchants fled to Syra. The British minister and a number of residents remained on board a liner at Salamis Bay, but Compton Mackenzie and his satellites withdrew to Syra and established themselves on shore. There was also a liner full of refugees in Syra Harbour.

The occupation was to have had the effect of giving us control of Greek communications, constituting a guarantee that the Government could not be up to any mischief without our knowing it. Was this really necessary? Were we really in danger of a declaration of war against us by the Greeks? I can hardly believe King Constantine or the pro-German party would have been so foolish. Never-

theless, it was possible, and, had it happened, our Salonika forces, attacked by the Bulgars in front and by the Greeks in the flank, might well have been driven into the sea. Be that as it may, the Greek reaction surprised everybody.

The Allies, feeling that such an incident could not be overlooked, but reluctant to go to war with Greece, declared her under blockade, exempting from its action those parts of Greece which owed allegiance to Mr. Venizelos. Syra having become a focus of activity, Captain Clifton Brown, in H.M.S. *Grafton*, had been sent there from Crete, and, with Compton Mackenzie's assistance, had caused this island to declare itself in favour of the Provisional Government, thereby emerging from the rigours of the blockade into the sunshine and smiles of Allied naval protection.

The *Grafton* possessed 6-inch guns, and these were wanted further north. Thus it came to pass that the goddess *Latona* returned to the scene of her old-time travail.

If, when Syra was still uninhabited, Zeus, hovering over its highest point, had taken a sack of lump sugar and emptied it upon it, he would have produced exactly the effect of the scene which greeted my eyes as I moored in the tight little harbour. It was dominated by a hill so well covered with white villas that it resembled a sugar loaf, and the clean white gleam made it seem a joyous place. The harbour, too, was full of life, and not unimportant to us, for it contained a slipway on which our trawlers were hauled up periodically for refit.

A Greek torpedo boat, under Lieutenant-Commander Voulgaris, represented the Venizelos Government, and was placed at my disposal. I had besides a couple of trawlers and a drifter, while Mackenzie, whose financial resources seemed endless, added to the squadron by hiring a yacht.

The King is dead. Long live the King! In spite of the fact that King Constantine was really popular in Syra, he was never mentioned now, and numerous protestations of loyalty to Venizelos reached me from the local inhabitants. I had no particular instructions, and my functions appeared to resolve themselves into doing what was possible to extend the territories of the Provisional Government which was fighting for us, and to give it an effect of permanence and reality.

The merchants, mostly ship-owners, who had fled from old Greece, naturally wondered what was to happen to their shipping business now that Greece was under blockade. I invited them all on board, and explained that the *status quo* was likely to last for some time, and, as Athens was now out of court, Syra would have to replace it as a Greek commercial port. Consequently, their best policy would be to run their businesses with Syra as headquarters. They listened gravely, but how far these keen business brains felt my views to be inspired and therefore to be acted upon, or how far they discounted them as the ebullience of an over-enthusiastic young officer who could not really understand their commercial affairs, I have no means of knowing. It was in the interests of the shipowners to keep their

ships running, for they were making fabulous profits. No doubt they did so, but I detected, even at the time, an air of scepticism when I told them that Syra was the new Piræus, and that their interests lay in developing it to the fullest extent.

Under the same general policy fell another type of operation, which had been initiated by my predecessor, aided by Compton Mackenzie.

The islands which surrounded us were already in a bad way owing to the blockade. The Greek peasant lives chiefly on bread, but the islands grew no grain, and all flour had to be imported. The exact destination of every cargo of wheat was under the control of the Allies, and since the islands drew their supplies normally from the Piræus, which port was now no longer receiving supplies, their blockade was automatic. Already they were starving.

The Island of Tinos had been approached by one of the Greek-speaking Englishmen working under Mackenzie, and the Mayor, having declared himself in favour of Venizelos, had been supplied with flour by Captain Clifton Brown.

I continued the same policy, proselytising in turn the Islands of Andros, Zea, Thermia, Siphnos, Kimolos, Mykoni and Hydra. The procedure was roughly the same in each case. A trawler, having on board an officer in British uniform who was proficient in modern Greek, and carrying a small cargo of flour, would arrive at the island and notify the Mayor that it was desired to address the official representatives of the island. The officer would

then explain to them the political situation as he saw it. He would tell them of the splendid stand made by Venizelos in the interests of Greece and the Allies, and how the King, having betrayed the Allies, should no longer be followed. He would tell them of the blockade, and that a declaration in favour of the Provisional Government would automatically lift it.

The result was nearly always the same. After a little private deliberation, they would formally declare the island in favour of the Provisional Government, whereupon the flour was landed, and in due course, no doubt, officials of the Venizelist army initiated recruiting.

Every evening I was able to signal to our Vice-Admiral, who doubtless passed it on to Mr. Venizelos, the adherence of another island or two.

Naxos, a large island, whose chief industry is the quarrying of marble, gave a lot of trouble. The authorities in the port were anxious enough to declare for Venizelos, and did so, but a large village in the centre of the island, called Apeirentos, the home of the marble quarriers, would have none of it. These villagers were a race apart. The name of their village signified that they were 'not pirates', but their conduct scarcely bore this out. They all wore bright red caps which gave them an appearance piratical in the extreme. Most of them possessed a gun of some kind, and their houses were full of dynamite which they used in their quarrying.

When reports came that these villagers would have none of Venizelos or the Venizelists, the Greek

Colonel at Syra replied by commanding the small garrison in the island to put the rebels under blockade, and the garrison complied. Pent up in their rocky habitation in the mountains, the villagers now had a chance of a little rapine, and they welcomed it. Blockade them, would they? Very well, then, they should see! Every night, raiders descended into the lowlands and returned with sheep, goats and cattle, which they hemmed into their narrow streets, until their village looked like a market town on fair day, while the local authorities were impotent, for the troops declared themselves not strong enough to attack the villagers in their fastness.

Having supplied themselves with cattle, they now went on to raid the vineyards, but when they included a convent in their depredations it was felt they had gone too far.

It was in vain that we had sent our most persuasive orator, Hugh Whittall, who, gathering the villagers about him, had addressed them as follows:

"Oh, men of Apeirentos, be it known unto you that your great leader, Venizelos, has taken the sword to fight side by side with the King of England to win back for Greece the glories of olden times. Know also that Constantine has betrayed you in shooting down the men who had the true interests of Greece at heart. Know that while Athens is being punished by blockade, the islands of Greece have flocked to the banner of Venizelos. Will you not also join him?"

But the Apeirentians replied, "Constantine is our

King. We know nought of Venizelos but that he is a Cretan."

Further exhortation produced the reply, "Let the King of England annex us. We will gladly become British, but we will not owe allegiance to the Cretan Venizelos."

There was nothing more to be done by diplomacy, and the Greek Colonel at Syra sent reinforcements to Naxos to attack the village. Lieutenant Voulgaris was in difficulty in the matter, as he wanted to be in the fight. He begged me to lend him a Maxim gun which he could send with the troops. I complied, and in due course the attacking force approached the village. A spirited fire greeted them, both men and women using rifles and firing from the tops of their houses. A few volleys in reply soon quelled the rebels, and they surrendered. Naxos was at peace once more. There were, however, a number of casualties, to which the *Latona's* surgeon, Dr. Rutherford, was fortunately able to attend.

I was subsequently hauled over the coals for lending my Maxim, but I think now, as I thought then, that as Venizelist Greece was fighting on our side, every help we could give—and the provision of a weapon or two was little enough—should be ungrudgingly provided. It was necessary for them to restore order in Naxos, and the alarming noise of a Maxim was probably instrumental in causing a quick surrender, so saving many lives.

The day came when nearly all the islands near us, owing to our activities, had joined the Pro-

visional Government, and Venizelos' position had doubtless been considerably strengthened. There were, however, one or two exceptions. Milo we could not touch since it was a French naval base, and our allies would have resented any interference on our part. Seriphos, another large island, contained a Greek military garrison which was loyal to the King's government. The Greek Deputy for Seriphos was a Venizelist, and had come to Syra to tell me that he believed his constituents could be won to the cause of the Provisional Government. If we would land him on the Island and, at the same time, remove the garrison, he counted on their declaring themselves in a few days for Venizelos and the Allies.

In the light of this information, it seemed a pity that Seriphos should have to starve, and that such a fruitful field for recruitment should be neglected, but the garrison presented difficulties. I decided to go myself, accompanied by the Greek Deputy and Professor Dawkins, who was fluent in modern Greek. I also took the usual consignment of flour.

As we approached those mountainous shores, changing rapidly from pale blue to deep purple and wine colour, we chatted together, whilst the Deputy told me of the simple natures and spartan lives of the Islanders, and of his own devotion to the cause of Hellenism. He did not wish us to approach the civil authorities. We had only to leave that to him. After a few days, when he had had time to travel round to the various towns, a revolution in favour of the just cause would effect itself automatically.

Now we were in the harbour, and could see the capital splattered high up the hillside and sheltered by still higher mountains. True to type, a more modern village had grown up round the port, and here, on landing, the young officer commanding the garrison met us.

Accompanied by Professor Dawkins, I repaired to his quarters and there discussed the situation. We told him of the growing power of the Provisional Government, and that if Seriphos would join it, as apparently its inhabitants were minded to do, they need no longer starve under blockade. His garrison was the only stumbling block, and I suggested that I might bring both him and it away with me to Syra and thence transport them to the mainland.

He was only an ensign commanding a hundred men, and I can well imagine his annoyance and distress of mind at the whole proceeding. We could not, I pointed out, allow the cause to be hindered by a garrison which chanced to be in the island, and although he saw only a little trawler, the might of Britain was behind it.

He took the point and capitulated. Thinking it not safe that his men should come on board armed, but on the other hand not wishing to humiliate him more than was necessary, I agreed to take possession of their ammunition at the barracks outside the capital, and that they should march down to the embarkation place with their rifles, which they would hand over on arrival on board.

A little later the Professor and I, trying to look

as dignified as possible with a guard of two sailors from the trawler, all we could muster, climbed the rocky path to the citadel. It must have been a funny sight, for the guard were just fishermen in naval uniform, and looked pathetically 'unsmart'—one with a ragged red beard, the other with a drooping black moustache. We wondered, as we climbed, whether we should share the fate of the Allied troops in Athens, and be greeted by a volley on the barrack square, but our young officer had been true to his word, and on our arrival the garrison was paraded, and a pile of ammunition boxes was laid before us. The men had their kits with them, ready to march, and when I had satisfied myself that their rifles and pouches were empty they set off on their way to the port, the problem of transporting the ammunition being left to me. This was easily effected. A boy, for a small wage, gathered his cronies about him, and, shouldering the boxes, they followed us down,

Thus, when we sailed, minus our flour but plus a small army, we left the field clear for the political activities of the elected representative of Seriphos. Some days later the island signalled its allegiance to the Provisional Government!

Housing the troops at Syra, I referred the knotty problem of their eventual disposal, and that of their rifles, to the Vice-Admiral. He ordained that they should be landed with their arms and ammunition in old Greece, and this was accordingly done.

The daily tale of the islands who transferred their allegiance so unexpectedly to the Cretan must

have had its effect in Athens, and King Constantine protested against our action. Some agreement was arrived at between him and the Vice-Admiral, the details of which I do not know, and the fiat went forth that no more islands were to be converted. It was not of serious consequence, for all those within my sphere of influence, and indeed practically the whole of the Grecian Archipelago, had already come over. There was, however, Cerigo, which hung like a pearl drop from the southern point of Greece, very much as Ceylon swings from the southern tip of India.

From the point of view of naval administration, Cerigo was in the Cretan area, and the British S.N.O. at Suda Bay, no doubt desiring to play his part in the great Greek metamorphosis, sent to the island an expedition duly provided with interpreters and flour. The operation took some days, and when the expedition returned to Crete, proudly reporting a conversion and the islanders' enthusiastic declaration in favour of Mr. Venizelos, the Vice-Admiral's order had already reached the S.N.O. Naturally the doings had to be reported, and the Vice-Admiral found himself faced with the appearance of having broken his word to the King in effecting a conversion after he had promised to desist. There was only one thing to be done; the island must revert to its former allegiance. A new expedition was fitted out and sailed for Cerigo. Once more, as has been told in another book of reminiscences, the local authorities were assembled, and it was explained to them that after all it was better that

they should maintain their allegiance to their king. It mattered little to them so long as they got their flour. They probably thought the British an incomprehensible people, but they acquiesced, and Cerigo rejoined old Greece.

We at Syra smiled as the various signals and messages revealed what had occurred. My own amusement was shortlived, for by the mail-steamer a day or two later came Lieutenant-Commander Powell, who informed me that he had been sent to relieve me, and produced his appointment. To say I was surprised and regretful is to understate the case, for the varying experiences the *Latona* had brought me were, in their interest, far beyond anything naval life had hitherto afforded. Telegraphing to the Vice-Admiral, I learned that I was required at the Admiralty. Although I asked him to keep me if he could, and I believe he tried, the answer came that I was to go home. So home I went, travelling in a French destroyer through the Corinth Canal to Taranto, and thence by rail.

Chapter Thirteen

THE ADMIRALTY

A VISIT to the Second Sea Lord's office threw some light on my recall to England. They told me there that Admiral Duff, who was in charge of anti-submarine developments, wanted me for something or other, and I had better go along and see him. I did so, and learned that the reason for which he had called me home no longer held!

He explained that, in one of my reports connected with paravanes, I had said that my kites could be developed to tow a net to protect merchant ships from torpedo fire. A project had been on foot to institute Sentry ships at various points along the trade routes, and, since these Sentry ships must be rendered torpedo-proof, now was the moment to make me develop my net. But, went on Admiral Duff, Sir David Beatty had since written to say that he no longer advocated the Sentry ship idea, and it had consequently been dropped.

How long would it take, the Admiral inquired, to get this thing going, should he want the nets? I replied that I was afraid I could not guarantee anything, but if he would give me the necessary craft and nets to experiment with somewhere in the mouth of the Thames, I hoped in a month or two to give him a favourable report. He appeared really hurt that I asked for such a long time for this trivial experiment, without even then promising results,

and intimated that this put the whole thing entirely out of the question.

Stated thus baldly, his attitude seems unnecessarily harsh and unsympathetic. But he was a man in a hurry, with an immense task on his hands, and one which would not wait. The country, through the Admiralty, required of him the solution of the submarine peril, and, if he failed to produce it, it looked as if England must go under. That, and nothing less formidable, was his position. It is not to be wondered at, then, that he had no time for lengthy experimental work, of which the fruits would not clearly be of value even if successful. His brusqueness was no more than a cloak under which he hid his keenness to press on with his work. Doubtless he would have liked me to say, "Give me a month, and you shall have this thing perfected for a certainty," but I knew too much of the vagaries and disappointments of experimental work to talk like that. One should beware of the inventor who adopts that tone, yet it is the one which carries conviction to the mind of the ordinary man. I perfectly understood that bringing me home for nothing had been an accident of the Service, which was nobody's fault. No apologies were needed.

Sadly I returned to the Naval Assistant to tell him that Admiral Duff did not seem to want me, and what should I do now?

The usual colloquy then took place, but the Naval Assistant was sympathetic.

"Well, let us see," he said, "what do you want?"

"I don't quite know," I replied, "but what have you got?"

"As a matter of fact, we haven't got anything. But still, I think you have been hardly treated. Now, is there anywhere you would like to go?"

"If there is nothing better," I replied, "I should like to go back to my old ship, from which I was so rudely torn, apparently to no purpose."

The Naval Assistant agreed that I certainly had a claim, and before I left his office I was re-appointed in command of H.M.S. *Latona*, feeling like one of those specks of glass in the amazing kaleidoscope of the war, which was always turning and turning and producing new patterns. I adjourned to the Club for lunch and gossip.

My journey was not, however, to be entirely fruitless. The Admiralty was not really unsympathetic, and the staff was anxious to get first-hand news from the Eastern Mediterranean. In particular, Captain Hope, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, was keenly interested in the Dardanelles minefield. I told him I thought it needed reinforcing, and he agreed, but he was thinking about the *Goeben*, and my thoughts centred chiefly on the submarines which, out there, we believed were using Constantinople as a base. He told me that a consignment of mines for the Eastern Mediterranean had just been torpedoed, and for the moment he could do nothing, but he hoped to send some more mines out there soon.

Paravanes, too, had made progress in my absence. It was now decreed to supply them in modified form

THE ADMIRALTY

to all merchantships, and my patents were involved, so that before leaving England I found myself certain of at least some financial reward for my invention.

Chapter Fourteen

LESBOS

WHILE I had been enjoying myself in London the *Latona* had returned to Malta to refit, so I had missed nothing.

By March 1917, she was back at Mudros, this time with orders to take command of the Fourth Detached Squadron based at Port Iero in the Island of Mitylene, the ancient Lesbos. This squadron now had charge of the blockade of the whole of the coast of Asia Minor from Tenedos in the north to Rhodes in the south, including Smyrna, and was the biggest command I had yet had, numbering three sloops, two converted merchant vessels, one destroyer, six to eight trawlers, a drifter, two small monitors, two or three motor launches and a squadron of aircraft.

It was with a feeling of pleasurable anticipation that I took the *Latona* through the narrow entrance to that wonderful enclosed harbour, and assumed the command from Captain Kennedy of H.M.S. *Lowestoft*.

Anatolia was quiet enough in all conscience, but surely on that long indented coastline which we invested so closely that scarcely a rowing boat could show itself in all those three hundred or more miles, some incident must arise to remind us that we really were at war. Our problem involved the most careful staff-work to keep the whole area pro-

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perly patrolled, and, at the same time, to arrange for each vessel to have its proper rests, refits and boiler cleanings as they became due.

Smyrna was, of course, the most important enemy port, but we had mined it pretty thoroughly already, and enemy submarines were afraid to use it.¹ The Turks, however, doubtless anxious to have an outlet for their energies, had a way of mounting guns in unexpected places on the coastline, and suddenly attacking our patrol vessels or any ship that might be passing. Our aircraft kept watch on Smyrna, and endeavoured to forestall any such activities on the enemy's part.

Words fail me to convey the loveliness of Port Iero, an immense inland sea in the very heart of romantic Lesbos. Its entrance was so narrow and shallow that the *Latona* could only just scrape through. Its banks were marbled rock, and behind them, on the rising slopes, dense forests of olives and oaks, and as, with some relief, we emerged from the narrow passage, our eyes feasted upon a sea of sapphire blue. Not a house was to be seen, no sign of habitation—only forest upon forest, with a background of bluish hills.

We anchored in a bay where all our diverse craft found shelter, and were able to haul our stern in close to the rocks, so that by aid of a gang plank it was possible to walk ashore.

I remember that our first visitor, when the gang plank was placed, was a barefooted Greek girl,

¹ See *Smoke on the Horizon*, Hodder and Stoughton, for an account of the blocking of Smyrna.

dark-skinned and beautiful, with roguish eyes, clothed in white, with a white cloak over her head, much as one might picture her forebears of two thousand years ago. Appearing from nowhere, she sailed on board, head held high with the dignity of a queen, and, when met at the gangway, announced with a merry laugh in a few words of broken English that she was "Nellie, the *Lowestoft's* girl—very good certificates," and she produced them. She had come for the washing. It seemed she was something of an institution, having collected washing for the *Doris*, the *Canopus*, and, in fact, each of the many ships which had worked there. The sailors affectionately regarded her as a mascot, but she was not allowed below the upper deck.

Vivid in my memory is my call on the Greek General Commanding at Mitylene. His was a big command. He handled the recruiting and training depot for the army of the Greek Provisional Government, and doubtless many of his soldiers owed their presence to the *Latona's* proselytizing activities amongst the islands a few months earlier. The General was determined to do full honour to the British representative, and a military guard and band were drawn up to receive me. After the formal salute, I was led up to his room in the barracks, where we attempted to exchange the usual civilities, but the band remained under the window and continued to play *God save the King* over and over again, so that conversation was difficult. He managed to convey, however, his immense enthu-

siasm for Britain and his confidence in the eventual Allied victory.

It took some days to get a grasp of this widespread command. Just when I was at last beginning to feel comfortable, and was turning my attention to a certain Turkish gun, mounted on a promontory of the mainland, which had been annoying our shipping, and which presented a tempting prize for a raiding party, the inevitable occurred. It was an order to hand over to H.M.S. *Anemone* and return to Mudros!

Chapter Fifteen

MINE LAYING

I WAS now getting accustomed to these sudden changes, and, though disappointed, had no doubt that life would provide some other good thing to atone for what it had snatched away. Therefore it was with feelings of expectant curiosity that I made my report to the Vice-Admiral on arrival at Mudros.

This time, I learned, *Latona* was to perform her proper function and take part in the laying of a new minefield off the Dardanelles. Not only were our deep mining experiments to be put to use for laying mines in water up to 50 fathoms, but it seemed, too, as if the new minefield were an answer to certain recommendations I had made by letter from Kephalo, and repeated unofficially to the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff in England. Probably I was wrong. No doubt it had been intended by the Vice-Admiral and by the Admiralty to lay these mines long before I had come on the scene, but it flatters the vanity of youth and inexperience to think it has had a hand in the shaping of great matters, and I felt flattered accordingly.

Latona now became one of the mine-laying squadron, consisting of H.M. ships *Biarritz*, *Latona* and *Perdita*, with Commander E. R. Morant, D.S.O., R.N., of H.M.S. *Biarritz* in command, and the plan involved a number of night expeditions

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to the Turkish coast. Some of the mines were to be laid very deep to catch submarines which it was supposed would be diving deep to get under the minefield, and others just below the surface to catch them if they tried the alternative plan of running on the surface at night to be above it. There were, of course, intermediate lines at normal depths. A cargo of mines having arrived, preparations were quickly made and the work commenced.

The first line we laid is memorable for me. It was one which started well to the westward in deep water, running right into the very heart of Suvla Bay within a few yards of the shore, and *Latona* and *Perdita*, carrying between them 150 mines, had this duty.

Everything depended on dropping the first mine at the right place, so that the last mine would also drop where it was intended, and not somewhere inland, nor yet too far out to sea. This was none too easy, as the chart of that particular vicinity was known to have an error in it, and positions fixed by cross bearings of one set of objects did not coincide with the same positions as fixed by another set of objects. Have I made myself clear, or is this "double-dutch"? If so, let us forget about it and pass on. At all events, the method adopted was to send out my skilful navigator, Mackenzie, in a trawler, armed with a sextant and other paraphernalia, and, having found the spot, just before dark a couple of days before the operation he dropped a buoy. This buoy must be so

small that the Turks would not be able to see it from the shore, and yet conspicuous enough for the *Latona* to find it at night—again by no means an easy matter.

The next process was to run a line of soundings from the buoy into Suvla Bay, and ascertain the exact depths of the water, for here again the chart could not be relied upon, and, owing to technical considerations, in this deep water it was necessary to adjust each mine for the exact depth in which it was going to be laid.

All these preliminaries were duly accomplished, and on a fine, dark night in April 1917, *Latona*, leading the little *Perdita*, found the buoy, and, when the *Perdita* had passed it, signalled to commence laying. The *Perdita's* 50 went first, of course, for if we had worked the other way *Perdita* would have run over *Latona's* mines. As *Perdita's* fiftieth mine dropped, she put her helm over and returned home, and at the same time, *Latona's* first mine splashed into the sea.

The mine-laying trade has a ritual all its own. There is a control room somewhere in the stern, whence the orders are issued for each mine to be dropped, and these orders are given at so many seconds interval, following instructions from the bridge. The timing of the intervals naturally depends upon the speed at which the ship is travelling, and the distance it is desired to have the mines apart, the latter generally being such that a ship missing one mine will just touch the next one.

The whole scene is uncanny. Everything is pitch

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dark, a dead silence reigns, yet the decks are teeming with men whose duty is to heave the great lines of mines along their rails so that there is always one ready to drop on each side. The mines have previously been primed, and are intensely dangerous. Shoot into a ship with primed mines, and in the fraction of a second it would be hard to find any scrap of her more than six inches long, so terrific would be the detonation. Fulminate of mercury is a dainty explosive. You can put a few grains on a plate, tickle them with a feather, and they will go off. Therefore it can well be imagined that a primed mine having an accidental fall on deck might have fatal results. It is, of course, the business of the designer to make the mine safe until it has left the ship, and in any case it has to stand a drop of several feet into the water without exploding, and generally does stand it, but there have been a good many nasty accidents while laying mines.

As each mine drops, it is signalled electrically to the bridge, and the sing-song voice of a seaman reporting, "No. 1 dropped, No. 2 dropped" and so on, keeps the Captain well informed.

A low rumbling tells of the mines moving aft, and muffled orders reach one's ears in the dead silence. The navigator is constantly checking his position as well as he can by the vague shapes of headlands. If the droning reports stop, one's ear is instantly aware of it. It means a "hang-up" and the whole calculation is upset, besides leaving a hole in the minefield. It would be necessary to

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shorten the time intervals in order to get the whole line laid before reaching the land.

On this occasion there is no "hang-up". The reports go monotonously on. We move silently on and on while the two black points of land which enclose Suvla Bay stretch out and engulf us. Now we are in the Bay, in rapidly shoaling water. Number 79 has gone. There are twenty-one more mines to go. Are our calculations right? Shall we be ashore before the last mine has gone? If so, the remedy is to shorten the intervals, but such an order, if given prematurely, will spoil the minfield by leaving a gap at the inner end. We are so close to the shore now that we must surely be under observation by the enemy. He has a gun at the head of the bay. We shall probably be under fire in a moment.

"No. 85 dropped—No. 86 dropped." We look infernally close to the shore, but bearings show us to be in position.

"By the mark—five," comes from the leadsman.

We have five fathoms of water. *Latona* draws 19 feet—just 11 to spare. We shall look a pretty picture next morning high and dry on the sand, with Turkish guns shooting us out of existence at a range of half a mile.

"No. 95 dropped."

"Deep—four," from the leadsman (24 feet).

We look as if we are practically ashore; the black beach itself is only a few hundred yards away.

"Shorten the intervals to three seconds," I

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order, and hear the order passed to the mine control room.

"No. 98 dropped—No. 99 dropped."

"Quarter less four," from the leadsmen, meaning that the depth of water is about 22 feet.

"No. 100 dropped."

"Hard a-port. Full speed astern starboard."

I breathe a sigh. Will she turn without scraping the bottom? The navigator is looking anxious, and no wonder. Now we are half round—not a touch. At last we are right round and steaming out.

The danger is over. No Turk appears to have noticed us, and the mines are laid into the very heart of the Bay. *Latona* has not gone ashore, to become a ghastly monument to the massacre of her company. We are bound for Mudros, taking great care not to run over our own minefield, and shall arrive there in the morning as soon as the channel has been swept. No ship may enter until the morning sweep for mines has been carried out.

Six times we repeated the operation in various combinations, and sometimes the *Biarritz* worked alone, until the entrance to the Dardanelles, which looked so peaceful and deserted, became a very magazine of gun cotton and T.N.T. It was a happy thing for us that it did so, for on this minefield the *Goeben* and *Breslau* met their fate in their famous sally early in 1918, the *Breslau* striking five mines and going to the bottom, the *Goeben* striking three and being able to limp home, never again in a fit state to operate until the end of the War.

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The last two lines fell to the lot of the *Latona* and *Perdita*, and one hot afternoon, as *Latona* was making her way towards the minefield, to be joined at dark by *Perdita*, Mudros called her up by wireless. Knowing that the Turks had directional wireless, and could ascertain the position of any ship at sea making a wireless signal, I had given orders that no calls were to be answered. It was a well-known fact in the War that the call signs of ships quickly became known to the enemy, and if the Turk heard *Latona* being called he would know her position, and from this would probably infer that mines were to be laid that night. From such a slender clue he might, by sending out a submarine or aeroplane to reconnoitre, locate the minefield and thus destroy its value. It behoved the minelayers, therefore, to be careful of the words they spoke on the ether, in fact not to speak at all if they could possibly avoid it.

The wireless petty officer was getting worried, for Mudros called repeatedly, and not to answer the flagship's call would certainly be put down to neglect on his part, and would get him into trouble.

At last he reported that we were being called on full power, and begged permission to reply.

I knew what this meant. My non-reply had been interpreted as indicating the possibility that *Latona* had been sunk. Not to reply to a call on full power would be to bring the hornets pouring from their nests to hunt for traces of the lost minelayer. I replied to the signal, not without a malediction on the flagship's wireless people, who by

their thoughtlessness might well have jeopardised the whole operation. As I expected, the signal proved to be merely a routine one, to see if the operators were alert.

The line that night ran north and south, not far from Rabbit Island, and a light had been lit on shore at a certain time to give us a position from which to start. *Perdita* had joined us, and was now in position astern. It was an inky night, but Mackenzie, peering over the compass and burrowing in his chart table alternatively had got the position accurately enough, and in five minutes we should arrive at the spot for *Perdita's* first mine to drop.

We congratulated ourselves that everything was just right and according to Cocker, when from the look-out on the fo'c'stle came through the silence of the tensely waiting ship a piercing hail, "Torpedo coming towards us, sir, on the port bow!"

I looked, and sure enough there was the straight white phosphorescent bar of a torpedo's wake, coming right under the bridge. There was nothing to be done, for even as I looked it was upon us, and with my heart in my mouth I waited. Nothing happened. I dashed to the starboard side, and there was the wake continuing on. It had passed underneath us.

No enemy could be seen, but concluding that an enemy submarine had come out to attack us, my first thought was to get *Perdita* to turn away so that she should not become a victim to a better shot than the one which had just passed under me. To

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get a signal through at night by shaded flash lamp is a slow business. One had to think of the briefest signal which at such a moment would cause *Perdita* to turn away from the danger. But even as I gave the order to signal, 'Negative lay mines, return Mudros,' knowing this would cause *Perdita* to turn away, a second hail came from the fo'c'stle, and a second torpedo, exactly like the first, charged at the bridge, and, oh twice fortunate *Latona*, again passed beneath. It was not the time nor place for laying minefields, with a hidden enemy somewhere, but Heaven only knew where, discharging torpedoes at one, and my helm then went over and both ships withdrew, temporarily routed, as I to this day presume, by an enemy submarine.

A day or two later we laid that line without interruption, and one more line, a few days later still, completed the work.

On arrival at Mudros, after the last mine had been safely committed to the deep, the Vice-Admiral called me on board. This time I confess he astounded me beyond all measure.

"The *Latona* is to be the S.N.O. ship at Salonika," he told me, "and you are to be S.N.O. in all probability. Of course, you will want a lot more accommodation in the ship, and your mine rails must come out to provide it. Submit a plan by to-morrow showing the proposed alterations."

With an armament of only four 4.7 guns, *Latona* was either a minelayer or she was nothing. Now she was to lose her mines to become, apparently, nothing; that is to say, a ship of no

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fighting value. I hated the idea. Still, Salonika was full of possibilities, and, well, in any case, 'orders is orders' and must be obeyed.

There was already an acting captain there, in the repair ship *St. George*, and when I had pointed out that he would be senior to me, the Admiral had brushed it aside, saying that the promotions were coming out soon, and if I was not lucky something would doubtless be done about it. At all events, there was no time to vent my feelings, for I had to spend the next twenty-four hours with the first lieutenant and the carpenter, planning alterations which were entirely to change the character of the ship.

By ten o'clock next morning the plans were in the hands of the Admiral, and by noon he had approved them. It was quick work, and the very next day *Latona* went alongside the repair ship to have her viscera torn from her body.

Chapter Sixteen

A HECTIC JOURNEY

UNDER Vice-Admiral Thursby, the complex machinery of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron moved on oiled wheels. He had a cheery word for everybody, while his twinkling eyes and hearty laugh were an infallible tonic to all who met him. He believed in keeping fit, and took his game of tennis or some other violent form of exercise every day. He was capable of instant decisions, and once his big jaw had snapped on a 'Yes' or a 'No,' that decision was irrevocable.

Then there was his Chief-of-Staff, Commodore FitzMaurice, who in peace time would spend his leisure hours in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, playing the organ, but who now lived for at least twelve hours of every day in a little office on board the yacht *Triad*, where, like a spider at the centre of his web, he watched and guided the many lines of activity of his squadron.

There were many other notable people, amongst them Commander G. O. Stephenson, who administered the trawlers on the station, of which there were a hundred or more, arranged their duties and refits, and also the training of the personnel in mine-sweeping and submarine hunting.

The art was in its infancy, and as the sinking of merchantships and transports was increas-

ing in the Mediterranean, and occurred from time to time under our very noses, this worried him not a little. His whole effervescent personality was one of bottled energy, a sort of living flask of compressed air. Not content, as some would have been, to administer his large and scattered flock, he was consumed with the desire to do more to win the War, and at that time all his thoughts were centred, like those of so many in the Navy, on the anti-submarine problem.

He lunched with me on the day *Latona* started her evisceration process, and the talk turned as usual on the hunting of submarines. Stephenson felt sure that hunting appliances had advanced greatly at home, but one might rely on it that the last people to get any new apparatus would be the unfortunate and forgotten creatures of the Eastern Mediterranean.

After a glass of port had warmed us, I suggested that, as my ship was to be immobilised, I should go to England, take stock of the situation, and see what anti-submarine gear I could collect. This proposal was made in jest, for it was no business of mine, but Stephenson thought it a fine idea, and immediately went over to propose it to the Vice-Admiral.

Twenty-four hours later I was on my way, with instructions to find out everything that could be discovered about the means of hunting submarines, and to bring back all the apparatus I could lay my hands on. Thus I came back to London once more.

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While reporting my arrival, Sir John Jellicoe, then First Sea Lord, sent for me and discussed the Eastern Mediterranean situation. He seemed worried. The submarine losses at that time were terrible, and he told me he had made a proposal to the Cabinet to withdraw the British army from Salonika in order to reduce our lines of communication and so free shipping. He mentioned the amount of shipping it absorbed—I forget the figures, but they were very high indeed—and obviously every ton we had was needed to maintain our army on the Continent and keep England fed. Such a withdrawal would, of course, have been an immense relief, but it might also have been a confession of failure in the Near East.

After so long an interval I cannot recall the famous Admiral's words, but my impression is that he thought the situation so serious that quite soon we should be compelled to withdraw, whether the Allied governments liked it or not. I realized, as I had never realized before, how the stranglehold of the German submarine attack on our merchantmen was causing those in authority in England to contemplate that ugly stranger, Defeat. Even Lieutenant Burney, who had so brilliantly perfected the paravane, when I met him in an Admiralty corridor, remarked, "We've scotched the mine, but I'm afraid the torpedo beats us."

In the course of a week or ten days, I had visited the various experimental establishments, and, with Admiralty assistance, had collected a truck-load of hydrophones and various other

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gadgets, together with working drawings of a whole lot more.

All stores were invariably sent to Malta by sea, but that would mean infinite delay, so by a bit of wangling I arranged to take my truck-load with me by continental express. To cope with the difficulties which would certainly be met with en route, the Admiralty gave me four sailors as an escort.

All went well till we got on the Continent, where we encountered an extraordinary desire on the part of railway officials at every stopping place to detach my truck and lose it in a siding. My sailors had orders to travel in the truck and to resist any attempt to unhook it, and the resulting arguments with stationmasters, shunters, and others, were highly diverting. No doubt the officials were acting according to some bye-law which forbade that a truck containing goods should travel with an express passenger train, but our strength lay in the urgency of war requirements.

A shunter or two would come quietly along, and proceed to unhook the truck, but a sailor would tap him on the shoulder, and, shaking his head, waving his arms and gesticulating, would cry, "Na poo!" This would send the shunter back to some superior official for further instructions, and very soon a gold-laced crowd would be assembled, pouring out unintelligible explanations and waving their arms. But the truck remained on.

Somewhere about Vallorbe, we thought we were on a good wicket, for the complex shunting and reversing and joining on bits and taking off other

bits, which was always going on, had got our truck somewhere in the middle of the train, but I felt sure there would be trouble in Milan. I tried to anticipate this by going to see the stationmaster on arrival, and pointing out the importance of keeping this truck on the train. He promised to comply, but at the last moment, just as we were starting, some swift Italian shunter managed to unhook the truck, and to my horror, as the train started, I saw my sailors waving on the platform. The truck had been left behind.

There was only one thing to do. I sprang from the train, and, throwing my arms round a portly official with a horn in his hand, shouted to him to stop the train in the most excited manner I could conjure up. Thinking there must at least be somebody under the wheels, he blew a whistle and stopped it. I then explained that, contrary to the promise of the stationmaster, they were leaving my truck behind. A hurried conclave took place. They replied that on the Rome Express it was impossible. . . . I insisted that war urgency required it, and somehow or other we got the truck hooked on once more.

By the time we had reached Syracuse, where a destroyer from Malta met us, my sailors were well-nigh worn out by their vigil, but they had acquired a whole vocabulary of effective gestures, sufficient to ensure them comfortable travel in any part of the world.

From Malta, the stores went on to Mudros by the *Osmanieh*, but I stayed for a few days' leave,

during which the best thing that can happen to a naval officer befell me.

I was at breakfast with my wife in a flat she occupied in the Strada Mezzodi, when Zebra Xicluna, the bumboatman, arrived unexpectedly with a large bunch of flowers, tightly bound together in a bouquet in the manner peculiar to Malta, with a smile so expansive that it nearly met at the back of his neck. I knew there was something up. Presenting the bouquet to my wife, he shook me warmly by the hand, and congratulated me on my promotion to captain.

A landsman cannot understand what this means—indeed, I would go further, and say that no one who has not passed through those two terrible gates, selected promotion to commander and to captain, with their oft-shattered hopes and bitter disappointments, so frequently sounding the knell of a career, can have any idea what it feels like when, having forgotten the whole business, one suddenly finds oneself in the list of the blessed.

A few days later a passage was arranged for me in the sloop *Azalea*, which, together with the *Aster*, also a sloop, was to escort the transport *Abbassieh*, containing hospital personnel and equipment, to Mudros. We left Malta, picking up the *Abbassieh* outside, the sloops being stationed one on either quarter in a position to ram any submarine which attacked her. I should explain that sloops were considered too small to carry paravanes.

We had not gone very far when I received a message from the Captain that there was some-

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thing wrong with the *Aster*, and going to the bridge observed that she was stopped, blowing off steam and listing over. One's first impression was that she had been torpedoed, and the *Astor* herself did not apparently know whether it was a mine or a torpedo. The Captain of the *Azalea* left the *Abbassieh*, which was a fast ship, to continue her route and steamed over to assist the *Aster*, which was now seen to be sinking rapidly. Coming as close as was practicable, he sent over his boats, meanwhile reporting what had happened to Malta, and calling the attention of some mine-sweeping and patrol craft in the distance by firing a gun.

It was a perfect day with a calm sea, and the submarine's periscope would certainly have shown up by now had one been present, but there was no sign of one, and, feeling certain that the *Aster* had struck a mine, I peered anxiously into the pellucid waters, wondering whether we too would share a like fate, since, if there were a minefield, we were probably in it. Sure enough, as I stared, I became aware of a flicker of red in the water about twenty feet away on the port side, abreast of our bow. I looked again. There could be no doubt, it was a mine, some ten feet deep, and freshly painted.

The Captain accepted the news with delightful *sang-froid*.

"Oh, well," he said. "In that position we can't very well hit it."

I was inclined to agree with him. It was well clear of the ship, and any slight headway or stern-

way we might have had should take us clear of it. So long as we stayed where we were, it seemed probable that we should not be on top of another mine since we were so close to this one, and if eventually we backed out in the same way as we had come in we might reasonably get away unscathed. Meanwhile, our attention was inevitably drawn to the unfortunate *Aster*, who, having just put her bows up vertically in the air, disappeared with a great gurgle, all her crew fortunately having been saved. Then I looked again at the mine, and to my horror saw that it was now within two yards of the ship, almost abreast of her stem.

"Look out!" I said to the Captain. "We are almost on top of that mine. We must be drifting sideways."

He gave one look, and ordered full speed astern, but it was too late. With a noise like thunder the whole of the bows rose in the air, and for the next thirty seconds a rain of pieces large and small kept falling on the bridge. We had achieved a record, and succeeded in blowing ourselves up on a mine we had previously seen.

The explanation was that there must have been a current, as there sometimes is after a strong wind in the Mediterranean, and it was carrying us laterally across the minefield. How it happened that we had gone out by a channel that had not been swept that morning I do not know. The responsibility lay with the Rear-Admiral at Malta who had issued the sailing orders, rather than with the Senior Sloop Captain who, I believe, had

carried them out. But the result was unfortunate, and we could only congratulate ourselves that the *Abbassieh* had not caught another mine or a torpedo to make the job complete.

It was not long before Malta sent out tugs, and the *Azalea*, whose injury was fortunately very far forward, was beached in Burzabuggia, eventually being brought into dock at Malta. As I was a passenger, and had no responsibility, I did not stay for the subsequent inquiries or Court-Martial. Finding a Japanese destroyer going to Mudros to escort the self-same *Abbassieh*, which had returned, I took passage in her.

Although my hosts could not have been more hospitable and charming, the days passed sitting on that destroyer's hot iron deck, with no shelter from the sun, were a torture hardly bettered by that of nights spent in the sweltering heat below.

The Captain had laid in enough European food for one square meal a day for three days, but owing to submarine reports our route was altered, and our journey prolonged, which meant that I soon found myself on an undiluted diet of rice and tea.

There were also pickled plums, and these were a great joke. As I had noticed that at meal after meal they were never offered to me, my curiosity was aroused. At last I asked if I might taste one. "Oh yes, you may," I was told rather doubtfully, and, as I helped myself to a luscious-looking plum, I noticed that all eyes were concentrated upon me. I took a large bite, expecting something sweet and juicy, only to find that it was the saltiest thing I

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had ever swallowed, and I might just as well have taken a tablespoonful of pure salt. My hosts burst into roars of delighted laughter as my wry face told its tale, and nothing was visible to me through my tears but countless rows of Japanese teeth.

That night I happened to step out of my cabin into the wardroom with bare feet to get a book I had left there. Nothing was said, but next morning a new pair of Japanese slippers was placed for me beside my bunk.

The Japanese are a charming people to work with for a common object, and in the War they gave themselves to the Allied cause without reserve.

Chapter Seventeen

THE GREAT FIRE OF SALONIKA

AT the tip of a narrowing horn some hundred miles long lay the ancient Macedonian capital, Salonika, and, at the time of which I write, it was a hive of activity greater than ever before or since.

Sir George Milne commanded the British Salonika army, which formed part of the Allied armies under General Sarraill. There was an Italian contingent, but it did not show up much at Salonika, as the Italian sector was far away to the west. There was, however, a Serbian army occupying part of the line, and Serbian officers and hospitals helped to make up the Salonika medley. Russia, too, had had a contingent there, but since her collapse the thousands of Russians one constantly met, of every rank from general to private, were merely non-combatants who did not know how to eliminate themselves or where to go, and, having no particular standing, were merely an embarrassment to everybody.

In the harbour lay a French battleship, the *Charlemagne*, commanded by Rear-Admiral Salaun. He worked with us as regards escorts for allied transports and store ships, and was, of course, the naval head, though I took my orders not from him, but from the Vice-Admiral Eastern Mediterranean. There was also an Italian cruiser and an old Greek warship, as well as the British

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repair ship *St. George*, under Acting-Captain Olivier. I had a squadron of four large torpedo boats, about a dozen trawlers, six motor launches, a monitor, a hospital ship, and a few odd craft.

In conjunction with the French, we daily swept the channel through the hundred miles of shallow water extending to the mouth of the Gulf, and an arduous task it was.

It was very hot. The army did not seem to be doing much. I had my work cut out to get to know the various corps and divisional commanders, and to acquire a general idea of the lay-out of the country and of the inner line of defence known as the 'Bird Cage Line', to which it seemed quite on the cards we might have to retire. In that case, the *Latona's* guns would come in for bombardment of enemy positions.

On hot afternoons the whole town went into a state of stupor. We on board were indeed fortunate, for sometimes a gentle breeze made life tolerable, and we were at least free of the mosquitoes and sandflies which harried the less fortunate mortals on shore.

It was nothing unusual for a fire to be reported either in the town or outside it, but with military contingents encamped almost everywhere the duty of putting it out, which the Navy usually allocates to itself wherever it may be, had been specifically taken over by the British Army, who administered the town, that is to say, of course, who supported the Greek administration of the town. Every care was taken not to offend the susceptibilities of the

Greek Prefect and other functionaries in charge of the civil administration.

One particularly hot afternoon—it was the 18th August, 1917—our signalmen reported a small fire on the outskirts of the town.

Salonika spread like a great white rectangular sheet on the slopes of a gentle hill. On the top edge of the rectangle was the old Turkish wall, at the lower edge the water-front. Standing like a sentinel at the eastern corner of the lower edge was the famous White Tower, a beautiful old Turkish fortress, now occupied by British naval signalmen; at its other end lay the docks—splendid modern docks with good wharfage for steamers, covered with warehouses for storing cargoes. The town itself was a mass of mosques and minarets, most of them centuries old and exceedingly beautiful in their austere simplicity. Running from the water-front, straight up the hill, rather towards the left of the town, was the famous Venizelos Street, its crowded bazaars filled with merchandise of the East.

Never was town more beautifully situated, for the slight curve of the waterfront relieved it of too great regularity, whilst the green hills and faint blue mountains behind made a noble setting. One could not forget its ancient historical associations, nor the brigand exploits of more recent years; and the fact that, at the foot of those mountains, ran the Bulgar trenches, gave the scene a deep significance. To the right of the town rose the headland of Kara Burnu (The Black Cape), and it was well

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named, for it stood out dark and forbidding, guarding its recumbent and oriental mistress like an ebony warrior.

From the soil of this headland had only recently been excavated a most perfect find—the bones of a soldier of the days of Philip of Macedon, with a beautiful silver shield, helmet and sword, all, I fancy, now in the British Museum.

Further to the right was an extensive plain, known as ‘Micra’, on which stood a number of large *tumuli*, or high mounds supposed to be the remains of prehistoric villages. To the left of the town as one faced it came the mouth of the River Vardar, and then the famous Vardar marshes, teeming with geese and duck, a paradise for anyone with boat and gun. Behind them, blue, cold and aloof, its summit often lost in the clouds, stood Mount Olympus, the ancient home of the Gods.

The first report of a fire alarmed no one, for, as I have said, small fires were of frequent occurrence. But to-day’s fire seemed to be more serious. A great column of smoke soon towered to the sky, while a patch of red flame at the top left-hand corner of the town was clearly visible. The wind was rising, too, sweeping the flame diagonally towards the centre of the city. Reluctant to hold back any longer, I landed a fire party, and these, with a naval fire-engine, some explosives and tools, and an immense supply of goodwill, climbed quickly to the source of the trouble and proceeded to do what they could. I little thought then that we were in for a blaze which would rank amongst

the greatest the world has ever seen, but certainly the dry wooden houses and the fanning of the rising breeze seemed to favour it.

Soon came a message to say that the fire was serious, asking for reinforcements, and more explosives. Sending what men I could, I landed to see for myself.

Mounting Venizelos Street, we were soon in a scene of the wildest confusion. The wooden houses at the top of the town were burning like tinder, and, as they caught fire, their wretched inhabitants were driven out into the street, dragging with them those treasures they most valued, which, curiously enough, generally seemed to be a mattress or a large mirror, sometimes both. With these on their backs they staggered away, and one could do no more than sympathize with them. A number of donkey carts, gay in their oriental trappings, were plying a thriving trade. Householders were engaging them, piling their belongings upon them, and directing the donkey boys to take them to some place of safety. These, however, being completely unscrupulous, like most orientals, would dash round a corner, tip the contents into the road, and come back for another load.

Old Turkish women, struggling along with huge mattresses on their backs, would find the burden too heavy, and eventually abandon it. As a result the streets became full of mattresses, which acted like tinder. A flying spark would light upon one and start it smouldering, and, in the strong wind now blowing, it, too, would become a fountain of

sparks to pass on the flame faster and faster through the town.

One party of blue-jackets, led by Mr. Wurrell, the *Latona's* gunner, was making a fight to save the town hall, a fine stone building, now completely surrounded by burning houses, whence flaming brands were constantly falling upon it. The sailors were on the roof, thoroughly enjoying themselves, dealing with each brand as it fell, and there they remained till the fire had swept past and the town hall stood alone in a sea of charred embers. It still stands to-day.

There was no means of checking the fire, for there was no water laid on in that part of the town. All that could be done was to rescue the inhabitants, many of whom were cut off in the upper storeys of their houses, and this was a job which the sailors delighted in.

Now the flames were approaching the better quarters. The streets were crammed with despairing people wringing their hands, and detachments of troops, some French, some British, mingled with the mob, anxious to help if possible, but not knowing what to do.

Outside a house, now burning briskly, stood a distracted Greek woman, wailing and gesticulating. Up came a naval lieutenant with a couple of blue-jackets, and tried to elicit from her what the matter was, but she would only weep wildly, pointing towards the house. It was still possible to enter at the front, so, thinking there must be someone inside, the lieutenant dashed in and the woman

followed. She pointed to the stairs, still intact, and he clambered up. He could see no one, but the woman, emboldened to follow, dashed past, and, making for a table, seized her brush and a mirror and made off with them. All this fuss about a bit of feminine claptrap!

Moving up the street, now almost deserted, the same lieutenant came to the dark studded door of a fine old Turkish house. As he passed, the door opened and an old Turk in his fez and cloak emerged, carefully locking the door behind him. At this moment, a small upper window opened, and three veiled female heads looked out. A torrent of Turkish came from them, interpolated by screams of despair. The old man turned his back and made to walk away.

"Stop, Mister," cried the lieutenant, taking him by the arm, "you're not going to leave those women up there?"

The old man drew himself up, resenting interference in his family affairs.

"*Je suis ministre!*" he said, fumbling with trembling fingers under his cloak for some papers. "*Personne n'a le droit de toucher.*"¹

But though no one might have the right to touch his harem, and though he might have been ever so important a minister in his day, the lieutenant thought otherwise, and seizing his keys, with which the old man parted most reluctantly, he dashed in and rescued the terrified women, who emerged trembling and moaning, but still discreetly veiled.

¹"I am a minister. No one has the right to interfere."

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Now the fire was creeping down Venizelos Street, and the lead gas pipes, bringing the gas up from somewhere near the shore, melted as it approached them, while the escaping gas roared into flame. It took a long time to get this turned off.

As I looked, an energetic Frenchman climbed a lamp-post whence a gas flame flared a foot or so high, and, taking off his coat, crammed it over the pipe, of course in vain. In a moment the flame had broken through his coat, and he himself, either through exhaustion or surprise, fell off backwards into the road.

A young French officer, very much excited, came up to me. Behind him was a squadron of *pompriers*, the French equivalent to sappers. He was in naval uniform, and was actually a young doctor. He appeared to think the time had come for action, and that all French troops belonged to him. He saluted and said, "Here are the *pompriers*. *A votre service, mon Général!* They will do whatever you command them. They will knock down a house, or anything you wish."

This was all very well, but it was not apparent how his *pompriers* could be usefully employed. I thought for a moment. There was just one chance. The fire had burnt down to a cross street which ran parallel to the shore, and if the houses on the south side of the street could be cleared of combustible material it might be possible to arrest it. I suggested that the *pompriers* might clear out the most inflammable things from the houses on the south

side, and at once the whole company disappeared inside the houses. It was a foolish suggestion doubtless, but the pompiers' manner of carrying out the order was certainly surprising. They had not been gone more than a minute before chairs, tables, dressers, and all manner of furniture came crashing out through the windows into the street, where, after having been a frightful peril to passers-by, they lay as an additional means of carrying the flames further. Rather ashamed of my thoughtless suggestion, I begged the pompiers to desist, whereupon, with the solemn, self-satisfied faces of men who had done their duty and done it well, they filed off to seek new fields of endeavour.

It rather looked now as if the whole town would be burnt down, and consulting G.H.Q., who did not take so serious a view, I ascertained that they were nevertheless organizing camps for the refugees, and arranging for all the lorries belonging to the army to assemble in the White Tower Square to convey them and their effects to the camps.

It was a brilliant piece of work to create in a couple of hours a camp for some ten or fifteen thousand people, and it was due, I have no doubt, to the initiative of the D.Q.M.G.,¹ General Rycroft of happy memory.

Night had now fallen, and, arranging for a party of seamen to help load the lorries, I returned to the *Latona* to take a broader view of the situation.

Gazing at the town, we saw a line of fire over a

¹ D.Q.M.G.: Deputy Quarter Master General.

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mile long sweeping diagonally across it, burning ever more fiercely in the rising storm. Nothing, it seemed, could stop it until it reached the White Tower Square where there was a large open space, and, beyond it, disconnected houses standing in their gardens. Here I thought it might be staved off. I therefore worked in two torpedo boats with their noses on the ground to bring their fire hoses to bear when the critical moment should come. But now a climax was reached. The fire was sweeping across the big hotels; the great mosques, too, were enveloped in flame, their minarets acting as chimneys up which the flame raged, pouring out at the top like so many giant candles. The sky above the harbour was black with smoke. Great sparks fell on board and all around.

A number of small craft were anchored close to the shore, and many of these our steam boats towed to safety, but others caught fire.

Presently the flame had reached a store, full of boxes of hand grenades. One by one these boxes burst with resounding bangs, hurling the debris into the sky.

The harbour was filled with little boats loaded down with refugees, all lit to an orange hue by the flaming city whence they had fled. No grander or more terrible sight could be imagined. The cries of the refugees and the roar and crackle of the flames, carried by the wind, were punctuated by the bomb explosions. High into the black canopy of the sky burnt the pale, white minarets with their flaming tops. Hell was indeed let loose.

There were many casualties, and but for the work of the troops and sailors there would have been hundreds more—perhaps thousands.

One of my officers, staring up at a burning hotel, found himself near a lady gesticulating in the crowd. She pointed to an upper window, crying, "My husband, my husband!" Sure enough, high up was the figure of a man, looking about with frightened glance. Could he have escaped by the staircase? I know not. But to jump was certain death. He evidently thought so too, and, even while they looked, he pulled out a revolver and shot himself through the forehead. The woman fainted.

No sooner had he got her out from among the trampling crowd than another woman, carrying a baby, touched him on the arm.

"Just one meenute," she said, handing him the baby, and before he knew where he was she had vanished, and he found himself the possessor of a fine boy! The woman never came back, and later there was some difficulty in persuading the authorities to take charge of the orphan.

Steam was being raised in the *Latona*, for the sparks were so big, and she so old, that I deemed her in danger of fire.

Many refugees had found their way down to the sea front, and were trapped there, with a crescent of fire behind and water in front. Our boats picked them up and transferred them to our ships.

Just then, to add to the excitement of the scene, a large lighter which had been anchored in shore

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caught fire, and, burning through its moorings, starting to drift down upon us. It was a real fire ship with flames twenty or thirty feet high, and coming straight for us. Before it was possible to grapple it from a steam boat and tow it clear, it was upon us, passing a few feet off the ship. We put a 4.7 shot through it to sink it. So close was it that to miss was impossible. The shot ricocheted and struck a French hospital ship, much to the indignation of her captain. Fortunately no one was hurt. Meanwhile, the fire ship was grappled and towed to seaward, where it quietly sank.

At one in the morning, the White Tower Square presented a strange scene. Everywhere were little groups of Turkish families, sitting huddled upon their household goods, apparently waiting with Oriental fatalism for what Allah would be pleased to ordain for them. Group by group they were gently shepherded into the lorries, baggage and all, and driven rapidly away into the country.

During the night the wind had luckily changed, arresting the further progress of the fire and blowing it towards the docks. Here there were more modern means of fighting it, and few of the big warehouses suffered. It was three days before the fire was finally got under, and more than half of that great city, including almost all its beautiful mosques, was utterly destroyed.

On the third day, General Sarraill held a conference. The problem was, what was to be done. I had commandeered an old Greek liner, the *Archimedes*, and, filling her with refugees, doled them

out food from the ships' stores. But this was a mere drop in the ocean, and the refugee camps contained many thousands. What was to be done with them? General Sarrail's idea was to send them to Athens. Special trains were accordingly arranged, but when it came to moving them, they all with one accord refused to go. Athens was a foreign land to them, and they could not see how or why they should desert the only home they knew, albeit no more than a ruin. So as the days went on, wood and wattle huts sprang into being all over the place, and Salonika became the most squalid hut settlement imaginable.

My young French doctor came off to see me next day, and had a tale to tell. In the first place he was in trouble, for he had apparently gone on shore without leave, and wanted me to testify to the excellence of the work he had performed on shore. He related how in an oil store the unfortunate owner had insisted on going back, and, caught in the flames, had died to death in his own oil. Then it appeared he had helped some priest to carry away the treasure of his mosque, in token of which he had been given a couple of silver ornaments of the kind which are carried on the end of banners in procession. He begged me to accept one, and I did, and wore it proudly as an ornamental truck on the ensign staff of my steam boat.

One moment I shall never forget. I was standing in Venizelos Street, and the flames were sweeping down upon us. The shops were full of carpets, silks and curios, making excellent fodder. One of

my warrant officers was standing at the entrance to a shop, crammed with all manner of precious things—Turkish swords, lamps and so on, rugs, and I know not what.

“Well, Sir,” he said, “take your choice. They won’t be here long.”

I looked in. I could have furnished a house with Oriental bric-a-brac and no one a penny the poorer, but sadly turned away, thinking of the awful consequences had it got about that the S.N.O. was found looting.

But the soldiery, notably the Greeks, were determined to make the best of it, and were struck, curiously enough, with the exceeding importance of rescuing the contents of the wine shops. After one such raid they laboriously rolled out a cask of Oozoo¹ into the street, and gathered like vultures round a carcass to remove the bung and feast. As luck would have it, a British sergeant and a couple of men came by.

“Hullo—what’s all this? Going to get blind on Oozoo, are you? Not if I knows it! Split the cask!” The Tommies fell to with axes, and very soon the luscious spirit was pouring down the gutterway along with the dust and refuse of the foul old city. But not so easily were the worthy Greek soldiers to be deprived of their reward. Down they went in the gutter, like, was it not, Gideon’s three hundred, and lapped with their tongues till all was dry.

Thus burned Salonika, and whispers went round

¹Oozoo: A white, sticky, sweet spirit, with a taste of aniseed.

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of enemy action, a rumour which the inhabitants were at pains to discount, for had it been proved their insurance would not have held good. The most authentic story I heard, to account for the fire, was that an old Turk in his wooden hut on the outskirts of the town was frying his dinner in a little tin basin, swimming with olive oil. The basin upset, the hot oil caught fire, and so the treasures of twenty centuries, the valued possessions of a sordid population, and the Allies' store of hand grenades, returned to their dust, while some five hundred souls soared to their Maker.

Chapter Eighteen

WORK AT SALONIKA

NAVAL functions at Salonika were varied, though not as a rule exciting. They were to 'route' and provide escorts for the shipping leaving the port in connexion with the Salonika army, to keep the channel swept and clear of mines, to hunt, and, if possible, destroy any submarine appearing in the area (some two or three thousand square miles), and to assist and co-operate with the army in any manner possible.

Routeing the convoys was an enthralling game. Information was available of all submarine reports, and how many submarines there were operating at any given moment, and one could make guesses at where they would be likely to go next. There were many alternative channels down the Ægean, so that if a submarine looked like working towards the Doro Channel, for instance, the convoys would be given an alternative route. The presence of an escort by no means ensured a merchant ship against being torpedoed. The only certain way was to avoid the submarine altogether.

This is roughly how the game was played. All days were alike to Commander Higginson, who was in charge of the minesweeping trawlers. These anchored during the dark hours under a convenient headland. Three a.m. would see his trawlers getting

under way and forming up to sweep. They would sweep to the outer end of the channel, and, if no mines were found, back again to the inner end of their section, reaching it perhaps at six or seven at night. After reporting the channel clear, they would anchor for a scanty rest.

To-day, they are in luck. They have not been sweeping more than half-an-hour when the pair on the extreme right report a mine in the sweep. It is towed into shallow water and exploded by rifle fire, while the commander informs Salonika by wireless. The report is received at 5 a.m. Its implication is that a minelaying submarine has paid a visit to the Gulf during the previous night and mined the channel, and cannot now be far off.

The first step is to deflect to Mudros any approaching convoys. That is done by wireless. The next is to stop the convoy that was about to sail from Salonika that morning, and inform the Vice-Admiral, so that a submarine hunt can be started all over the *Ægean*.

Our own submarine-hunting flotilla, equipped with hydrophones, and trained and practised on an obliging French submarine in Salonika Bay, is now out at the mouth of the Gulf. A brief signal starts them hunting, and the four torpedo boats set out to join them, making a hydrophone line ten miles long of vessels one mile apart. This line will now form up in the Gulf and sweep outwards, in order to cover as much water as possible. They will move slowly for, say, ten minutes. At an exact moment by synchronised watches, they will stop their

engines and all auxiliary machinery, lower their hydrophones overboard and listen for the submarine. All other craft in the vicinity, including the minesweepers, have to conform and stop at the same intervals as the hunting craft.

The French, who have fitted their destroyers with hydrophones made to our design, and have practised with us, send a couple of destroyers. I go in one of the torpedo boats and take charge of the hunt.

Almost at once we get propeller noises in our hydrophones, but the direction is extremely vague. The submarine seems to be making her way out of the Gulf. We increase speed and advance between the listening intervals. Now the sound is weaker. Presently we have lost it altogether.

We continue sweeping for half an hour, intending then to re-form and sweep north up the Gulf again, but at the last moment comes a report from the extreme left, "Propeller noises in the hydrophone." Breaking the line and closing to investigate, but keeping always to the rigid silence periods, I find two motor launches have heard the sounds. Now they have lost them.

It looks as if the submarine is sitting on the bottom somewhere near the coast, or possibly he has gone up the Gulf of Cassandra, or again, possibly the report was a false one.

Now comes a report from the right of the line, "Propeller noises loud, bearing south-east or north-west."

That was one of the exasperating features of the

so-called directional hydrophone. If you got a direction it was merely a choice of two opposites, and there was really no indication to tell you which was right.

But this time two torpedo boats have reported that the sounds are loud and unmistakable. I race back between the listening periods, and continue the hunt in a south-easterly direction.

"Propeller noises loud," reports torpedo boat No. 29, and we hear them too on board torpedo boat No. 30. Bearings seem to indicate the submarine is somewhere ahead of us, but they are vague. We listen again. This time the bearings are accurate enough to put the submarine in a circle of a couple of hundred yards' radius. Allowing for her progress, we predict her position in five minutes' time, and prepare to drop depth charges.

Over the horizon suddenly comes a ship. She is moving at high speed and approaches us rapidly. Soon we see she is a French destroyer, bound for Salonika. Knowing nothing of our hunt, she did not stop in the silence intervals. It is her propellers we have been hearing—their powerful churning at ten miles or more sounding like a submarine close to.

When she has passed we listen again. Nothing.

Perhaps the motor launches on the left of the line were on the right scent. We re-form the hunt, dividing it into two, one party sweeping the Gulf of Cassandra, the other the Gulf of Salonika.

Thus it goes on. Perhaps for two days or even three, during which the French destroyers and two

of our torpedo boats continue the hunt, unless they have escort duties, which take precedence over everything.

Meanwhile Higginson, having found and destroyed four mines, reports the channel clear. There are no further traces of the submarine, the hunting craft are short of petrol. The hunt is called off, patrols alone remaining in case the submarine has been lying 'doggo', and shows itself on the surface. Convoys to and from Salonika are resumed, and everything is normal once more. No one is hurt. The enemy has expended half-a-dozen mines or so, and the energies of a submarine. We have burnt a prodigious quantity of oil and petrol. Score—no goals on either side. Vague wafts of scent now and again, but never anything definite. A maddening process, sometimes even really leading one to the point of dropping depth charges, occasionally ending in a 'view-halloo', never, so far as I know, in a kill. But it was the only method we had, and we felt that success lay just round the corner; a little more practice, a slightly improved method, or a better hydrophone, would give us the victory.

The submarine had every advantage. Night was her friend, and she would take care to lay her mines just after dark, to be able to slip away at high speed on the surface, and by dawn be far from the madding crowd of the hunting craft.

Sometimes submarines would sink caiques (the small local sailing ships) when they found that available merchantmen were too well escorted, and

quite a panic was created over the monastic peninsula of Mount Athos when one or two boats belonging to the monks were attacked. A monk came to Salonika to visit me, and to demand further protection.

The hunting of submarines was of frequent occurrence. It broke the monotony of life and stimulated everybody, even though it did little to end the War. But the sinking of harmless Greek caiques, carrying their little loads of fodder and brushwood or vegetables, was a new departure, indicating that perhaps the submarines, who may have been bored and wanted a little safe sport, feared the escorted merchantmen too much to approach them. It could hardly be that they wished to bring Greece into the War on our side!

Whatever their object, the enemy action gave me an idea, and I obtained permission to fit up a 'Q' ship.

There was a lovely Greek caique lying at Salonika named *Vasilikai*, or, in English, *Queenly*, and well named, for her high prow and curving lines betokened a thoroughbred. Her straight, tall spar sprang proudly towards the sky.

I bought her for £1,000, and every night, after dark, she was towed alongside the repair ship *St. George*, and before daylight re-anchored well clear of other craft. A week's work, and she had been fitted with two concealed guns, a three-pounder and a six-pounder, and a deck cargo of brushwood which looked realistic enough. Lieutenant Milburne, of H.M.S. *Latona*, commanded her with a

naval crew, while a Greek crew, carefully kept away from the shore, was also retained.

Soon she was out cruising at the mouth of the Gulf, and before long she actually sighted a submarine on the surface. It was a long way off, however, and kept well clear, and since there was a flat calm and she had no motor, she could only wait and hope. But in all probability, since Salonika was full of spies, the enemy had already learnt that a decoy ship was in existence, for from that moment no further attacks on caiques ever took place.

Greek caique sailors do not take risks with the weather. Their crews are small, and, if caught in a blow with their great unmanageable sails set, they are liable to disaster. They must needs be very weather-wise, and, time being of little object, they fly into the nearest harbour at the slightest sign of bad weather.

Not so Lieutenant Milburne in his *Vasilikai*; once at sea he meant to stay there. But he was unlucky, and three weeks after our proud venturer had sailed in search of glory I saw her being towed in by one of Higginson's trawlers—a sorry-looking wreck. She had been caught in a gale at night, and her glorious mast had gone. To refit her was the problem. In all Salonika there was no spar big enough for her. An officer had to be sent to Athens to buy one, and meanwhile, for the crew, there must be no contact with the shore.

So the *Vasilikai* was anchored in Micra Bay, and, for lack of better employment, her crew set

out to excavate one of the ancient tumuli, and made quite a good job of it. The fruits of their efforts, in the shape of neolithic pottery, jars, spinning weights and the like, repose to-day in the British Museum amongst the other Salonika contributions—the only concrete harvest of the ‘Q’ ship *Vasilikai*’s gallant endeavour.

Enemy aeroplanes paid us frequent visits, and usually dropped a bomb or two. At least two attacks were made by squadrons of planes on military camps near the city, the planes dropping hundreds of small steel darts which proved to be very unpleasant and effective weapons. The more usual visitation was a single plane whose probable object was to photograph the harbour and find out what ships were lying there, a bomb or two being dropped on the docks just for luck.

These occasions were most valuable to the *Latona*’s ship’s company. We now had a modern three inch anti-aircraft gun mounted on the poop, and the moment a plane was sighted the bugle would sound. There would be an instant rush of men up the poop ladder, and within ten seconds, so keen were the men, the gun would be manned and ready to open fire. From the White Tower on shore observers were able to telephone the observed position of the bursts. Our gun was good for about twenty rounds a minute, and, as we developed our fire, the din on board became terrific, while the sky was soon filled with little black clouds which marked the passage of the aeroplane.

One of our seamen, when manning a steamboat alongside the quay, was seriously wounded by a fragment of a bomb. At first it was thought he could not live, so terribly was he lacerated and his inside exposed, but, amazing to relate, within three weeks he had completely recovered.

Some excitement was caused when an anti-aircraft shell burst in the hold of a ship full of ammunition lying in the docks. Fortunately it did not explode the ammunition, but, as may be imagined, the officer in charge of the docks had a good deal to say about it. We claimed that it could not be ours, and must have come from a French anti-aircraft gun, while the French politely assured us that this was impossible. At length, a conference took place on board the *Latona* with the officer in charge of the French anti-aircraft guns. A large fragment of the misguided shell was produced, and on seeing it he had to admit it was French. With profuse apologies, and promises to avoid a similar occurrence, the conference ended.

The Army had a kite-balloon which they used to put up somewhere behind the lines, and it invariably served as a bait for an enemy aeroplane, which could be relied upon to come and shoot it down. When this happened, the occupant of the balloon was supposed to jump out with a parachute. It was his only means of escape. Meanwhile, the usual anti-aircraft engagement would begin. On one occasion the kite balloon went up as usual, but the observer was a dummy, and the balloon basket, filled with explosives, was con-

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nected electrically with the ground. Presently the enemy plane arrived, and flew close up to the balloon to make sure of its occupant. At this moment, the button was pressed, the balloon exploded in a blinding flash, and the shattered aeroplane crashed to destruction.

The whole Salonika command enjoyed the incident, but the enemy conveyed the message, in the curious way in which the rival air forces seemed to control the rules under which their particular war should be fought, that they did not regard the ruse as a fair one!

Chapter Nineteen

BASE RECREATIONS

THERE was no lack of feminine society at Salonika. Hospitals abounded, English, French, and Russian, and, in addition, there was the Scottish Women's Hospital, entirely staffed by lady doctors, nurses, and V.A.D.'s, which served the Serbian army.

The British hospitals were mostly under canvas, some miles outside the town, and each had its corps of V.A.D.'s, who were kept hard at work with malaria cases, for the whole district was a hotbed of malaria. In spite of the almost incredibly rigid precautions taken, the casualties were enormous. The malarial mosquito was supposed to function only after sunset, and at this moment, whilst Moslems knelt towards Mecca and prayed, British Tommies turned down the legs of their trousers, which during the day were rolled or folded to the knees, giving the appearance of shorts. As far as possible, also, every man had to be under cover in his hut, or, if living under canvas, in his tent or bivouac, with the flap laced up, by sunset. In addition, he had a daily dose of quinine. The Tommy's life must indeed have been hell. In spite of all this the casualties continued, and kept the hospitals full.

But the V.A.D.'s, mostly young and spirited English girls, required some recreation to make life

tolerable, and on their afternoons off they might be seen trudging into Salonika. One of the orders of the high command was that joy-riding was forbidden, but that nevertheless hospital personnel, if encountered, hot and dusty, upon the road (or was it if encountered upon the hot and dusty road?), might be given a lift by an officer travelling in a service car. Nearly every officer on the staff had the use of a car, and as nearly all the V.A.D.'s, especially the good-looking ones, might safely be adjudged as hot and dusty without fear of contradiction and subsequent court martial, it may be imagined that lifts were the rule rather than the exception.

The D.Q.M.G., who had a niece among the V.A.D.'s, encouraged a certain amount of social intercourse, for, as he told me, it was much better for the young officers to meet these charming English girls than to be driven for feminine society to the cosmopolitan horrors known to the French commanded as 'poules', who were to be found at the White Tower cabaret, and indeed all over Salonika.

On a Sunday afternoon in the summer months, the whole of Micra Bay would be lined with bathing picnic parties. Presumably all these had resulted from ardent staff officers engaged upon their duties encountering chance hospital personnel, hot and dusty, on the road. The dust and heat could, apparently, only be allayed by the whole party plunging into the sea!

The *Latona* was not unpopular amongst the

military, as she frequently had a steam boat available for paying an inspection visit to the mouth of the harbour, and such visits could be used for regenerating the health of the garrison by bathing picnics in delightful and deserted sandy bays.

I was fortunate in having the use of a car, and made a point of taking one of my staff to study the lie of the country which I might have to bombard in the event of the garrison withdrawing to the birdcage line. These expeditions sometimes led past one of the British hospitals situated on the foot-hills of Mount Hortiac. Strangely enough, on one or more of these occasions, the D.Q.M.G.'s niece and one or two of her friends, who, being employed on night duty, were supposed to be sleeping by day, were by some coincidence hiding amongst the bushes by the roadside not far from their hospital. They were, when I passed, hot and dusty objects of compassion, and it was a mere act of kindness to pick them up and take them for an afternoon's drive. Inquiry showed that on these occasions a dummy would be carefully arranged in the V.A.D.'s bed with a lock of hair visible at the pillow, so that the matron on her rounds might be satisfied that all was in order.

The Divisional and Corps commands, comparatively near the front line, used to organize theatrical shows—and very good ones too—to keep themselves alive, and efforts were always made to get the V.A.D.'s to come up and grace them by their presence. But the head matron at the base did not approve. To gain her favour, she was in-

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vited on a tour of inspection of the front, and royally entertained. Every *Vie Parisienne* picture which adorned the dug-outs she was to visit was carefully taken down. The front oozed respectability. The whole entertainment was planned like the inspection of a general, whilst the V.A.D.'s at the base waited on tenter hooks for the result. But it was no use. All the military blandishments failed, and the matron proved her mettle by adhering to her refusal, amid a muttered thunder of feminine imprecation and male despair.

Chapter Twenty

THE FRONT LINE

FAR away towards the west of our line, in the Italian sector, lay the great Lakes of Presba and Ochrida. There had been a certain activity in this region, German parties reconnoitring Lake Presba in fast motor boats. Deeming it desirable to ascertain whether there was anything the Navy could do there, I obtained permission to visit these lakes, involving a three days' trip, and set off by car with Paymaster-Lieutenant T. E. R. Harris, one of my staff.

It was a most delightful journey; the Macedonian country possesses peculiar charm. Travelling west across the broad Vardar plain, one comes eventually to a great cliff, some thousand feet high, its face covered with trees and verdure, amongst which can be seen the glimmer of cascades and waterfalls. This marks the beginning of the uplands, and perched on the crest, where the winding road gains the summit, is the little town of Vodena.

Would I could convey the charm of this primitive place, which produced so many beautiful things. Its main street consisted of open-fronted shops, each with its own speciality, made in the back regions. One would specialize in copper saucepans, and, when you had stepped over and through several hundred of these, you found them

in process of manufacture at the back. Another would deal in the coarsely-woven but beautifully embroidered Macedonian tablecloths, of which I bought several, but have never yet found any use for them. Everything was so primitive, and, strange to say, so clean. The sun sparkled on the little Mosque and on the orthodox Church impartially. The air was intoxicating. Picturesque farmers in fur caps and fur boots lounged around. No doubt war had stimulated trade here, and had brought Vodena prosperity, but in nearly all respects its life and appearance were just what they must have been for centuries.

We passed on to Lake Presba where, after calling on the officer commanding this section of the line, facilities were provided for viewing the Lake and visiting an island which had been the scene of an affray only a couple of nights before. The Lake formed part of the dividing line between the opposing forces. It appeared that a German staff officer in a fast motor-boat had been in the habit of touring it at night, and had been observed to land on the island which was near the south end, and was uninhabited. It was covered with trees and scrub, amongst which stood a ruined chapel and a house. A band of Macedonian *comitadjis*¹ had offered to deal with him, and had been hidden there to wait their opportunity. The very next night it came, for the German motor-boat steered right into a little bay, less than fifty yards from the concealed brigands. The latter had no scruples,

¹ *Comitadjis*: Brigands.

and opened a withering fire, killing everybody on board. The motor-boat was captured.

We landed on the island. It was fascinating, just the place for a picnic, and it was hard to realize that only forty-eight hours before it had been the scene of such a grisly slaughter. The Italian General seemed to think that it would be some time before the Germans tried any more games on the lake.

On Lake Ochrida our Allies had quite a flotilla of their own, and no assistance by the British Navy was desired.

We returned to Salonika, but with difficulty, for our way led through a mountain pass which was under deep snow, and, the chains of our car having broken it became more and more unmanageable as we climbed, until at last it gave up the ghost and would go no more, the wheels simply slipping round and screwing the car from one side to the other of the road. I had to get back to Salonika by the next morning, and knowing that a ten mile walk would bring me to Florina Station, from which there was a night train, I set off with my interpreter, leaving Harris and the chauffeur to spend a happy night guarding the car.

We were now in the French section, and an obliging French camp commandant promised help for the car in the morning. We reached Florina and caught our train, but it was three days before poor Harris got back. The chauffeur had allowed his radiator to freeze, and the car had to be towed in by German prisoners to the nearest dépôt.

A pleasant duty lay in keeping in touch with the Army, and I accepted gladly when General Duncan, commanding the 22nd Division, invited me to stay at Divisional H.Q. on the Doiran front. After a cheery dinner and a somewhat cold night spent in a wooden hut, the General showed me round. Comfortably mounted on army chargers we visited various gun positions behind the line, whose camouflage was so good that often you could walk right past them without seeing anything but the rock and scrub and stunted trees indigenous to the region.

Nearing the front line we dismounted, and the General led me down a communication trench into the irregular zig-zag of the first-line trenches. These were scarcely manned at all—just a man here and there on the look-out, and an occasional machine-gun post. Such men as there were all seemed to be personally known to him, and he had a word for each. It was a misty morning, and the Bulgar front-line trenches, only some three hundred yards off on the opposite side of a ravine, could just be seen. I could not for the life of me see what there was to prevent the Bulgars walking across should they choose to do so, but doubtless the defending troops were hidden somewhere in the vicinity.

“We have a new trench here,” he remarked, “leading to an O.P.¹ It is not quite finished yet, but I think we’ll go down it.”

We went, and the empty trench gradually

¹ O.P.: Observation Position.

shallowed until we were only protected from the knees downwards. The tall General stooped, and I did likewise.

"They probably won't see us in the mist," he remarked, but there he was wrong, for almost as he spoke there came a bouquet of shell bursts, showing that the Bulgars had spotted us.

"Come on," shouted the General, and raced forward another thirty yards or so, finally reaching a little dug-out. Fortunately for us it was finished.

Here we decided to lunch, and, pulling out our sandwiches, fell to, letting the whiz-bangs whiz-bang.

It was quaint. Whilst in the knee-high trench, my feelings had been mixed, but the dug-out seemed perfectly secure, and I could not help laughing at our comic plight. The General, however, doubtless felt it was up to him to get us safely back behind the lines, and while conversing affably on various topics, kept one ear cocked, I noticed, to the Bulgar activities. When the shell-fire had died down, he suddenly decided it was the moment to go, and, in spite of the fact that I had not finished my sandwiches, insisted on my coming with him. Spurning the trench, which, after all, was but a mockery, we ran straight back to our own front-line trench, and, jumping the parapet, arrived panting but unscathed, the General trying hard to look dignified.

When, a little later, cantering across a wide grassy plain, he pointed to a shell-hole and remarked that the Bulgars usually shelled this plain,

and that he had had a horse shot under him there, his remark fell rather flat. I should explain that he had a reputation for liking to scare people in a friendly way. The prospect of putting the wind up the Navy must have afforded him pleasurable anticipation, and doubtless the way in which the Bulgars had assisted him formed a topic of conversation which relieved at least one dull evening.

On another occasion, further along the line, I stood on a hilltop, and watched the slow shelling of British trenches by the Bulgar artillery. It was a tedious business, the shell arriving with the regularity of clockwork once a minute. Burst after burst occurred near but not in the trench, and it was only on leaving some twenty minutes later that we observed one casualty being carried to the rear on a stretcher. It is interesting to reflect that it was at this part of the line that the advance was made, later on, which broke the Bulgars' resistance, and started the great avalanche of surrenders and armistices which ended the war.

The Salonika front, so quiet in appearance, was in reality the centre of continual discussion amongst those responsible for the conduct of the War. The military Commanders-in-Chief had much to occupy them, urged on the one hand to take more active measures against the enemy, threatened on the other with a reduction of their forces for the double reason of the difficulty of maintaining them at Salonika and the necessity for reinforcements on the main front, and conscious always that the Germans, with their interior lines,

might at any moment bring a force to bear which could sweep them into the sea, much as they had over-run Rumania.

In my time at Salonika I saw General Sarrail, who was in chief command when I arrived, relieved of his command and replaced by General Guillaumat. General Sarrail was an impressive personality, with his erect figure, burning eyes and curly white hair and moustache. He moved in the greatest state, with outriders and fanfares of trumpets, but I believe he spoke no English, a fact which must have made things difficult for the British Commander-in-Chief, who spoke no French. His sudden return to France caused the wildest rumours. Apparently he took too large a hand in politics, and this destroyed him. General Guillaumat did not remain long, and was succeeded by General Franchet D'Esperey, another type of dashing French soldier who was delightful to work with.

Chapter Twenty-one

THE SORTIE OF THE "GOEBEN" AND "BRESLAU"

AN incident which remains in my memory was the visit to Salonika on the 18th January 1918, of Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler, then commanding the British *Ægean Squadron* in the *Lord Nelson*. Such a visit was most unaccustomed, since the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* had always been kept at Mudros ready to engage the *Goeben* should she emerge from the Dardanelles. But presumably Admiral Hayes-Sadler had sufficient confidence in the new minefields to feel justified in making it.

He arrived in the evening, and the next morning found Salonika wrapped in one of the densest fogs I have ever experienced.

Fortunately we had, some months earlier, found a piece of Turkish submarine cable about a mile long, and laid it between the White Tower Signal Station and the *Latona*. Thus, when the signal, sent by land wire from Mudros, reached me, that *Goeben* and *Breslau* were at sea, I could only send it over by boat to the Flagship, where it doubtless produced quite a stir, for if ever a British man-of-war had been 'caught bending', it was the *Lord Nelson* on this occasion.

Forty minutes later, when steam had been raised, she was nosing her way through the gate and

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down the narrow swept channel, a hundred miles long, which led to the mouth of the Gulf.

It is hard to imagine the Admiral's feelings. Everything seemed to have conspired against him. First, the coincidence of dates, if it was a coincidence, and not an indication of good enemy intelligence; and then the fog, blinding, delaying, making for confusion and adding greatly to the mine danger. Especially so, when the enemy had in all probability laid new minefields as a part of the operation.

However, as it turned out, neither the *Lord Nelson's* visit nor the fog made any difference. The minefields had already done their work with tolerable effectiveness, and the *Goeben*, with three holes in her side, had turned back and run ashore in the Narrows, while the *Breslau* had sunk outside.

Had the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* been together, and had they left Mudros at the earliest report of this sortie, they could not have caught her. Indeed, the *Agamemnon* had put to sea on receiving the news, but she was too late. It only remained to attempt to bomb the *Goeben* to destruction from the air, and the whole station held its breath while the airmen got busy.

The Salonika army had ideas about bombs, and I sent a torpedo boat to Mudros to get from the *Lord Nelson* a few 9.2 armour-piercing shells, weighing nearly 400 lb, and these the Army fitted up as aerial bombs. The shell would, we hoped, penetrate some at least of *Goeben's* decks, and thus disable her in a way the ordinary bombs of the day

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could not do. At full speed a torpedo boat delivered the prepared shell to Mudros, and thence the aircraft took them on, but alas, like about 99 per cent. of bombs dropped in those days, they missed, and spent their substance in the sea.

When news came that the *Goeben* had been got off, and had gone up to Constantinople, we all felt that a magnificent opportunity had been missed, and so, as one does with unpleasant events, we forgot this one as soon as possible.

Chapter Twenty-two

MOUNT ATHOS

EARLY in 1918, I thought it desirable to pay a visit to Mount Athos, the home of the famous monasteries, where, in a tract of land some 80 miles long by 15 broad, no female thing is permitted to dwell. Not a cow, not even a hen, is allowed on this holy mountain. The Blessed Virgin is expected to visit the monks, or so I gathered, at the Second Coming, and it is for her they are reverently waiting.

For one thing, as I have related, sundry caiques belonging to the monks had been sunk; for another, I wished to establish a new look-out post on the end of a neighbouring promontory. There was also a Bulgarian monastery which might or might not be trading on its privilege, and supplying information to the enemy.

I took with me Colonel Sir Ernest Grogan, the military intelligence officer, and an interpreter, and, leaving Salonika in the evening in one of the torpedo boats, arrived in the early morning at the little port in the Gulf of Haghion Oros, which served to connect the great Bulgarian monastery with the outside world. Here there is a pier, and a small monastic building in the charge of two or three monks. Having notified that I proposed to call on the Holy Abbot later in the morning, we glided away to make further exploration of the Gulf.

It lies between the central and easterly prongs of that great pitchfork which thrusts itself down from Macedonia into the northern waters of the Aegean. The eastern prong is the famous Mount Athos Peninsula, high, rugged, and densely covered with pines, oaks and olives, culminating at its southern end in the bald, precipitous and frowning height of Mount Athos itself, which, like a great couchant mastiff, scowls down upon those blue waters where once Ulysses sailed.

The central prong, known as the Langos Peninsula, separates the Gulf from that of Cassandra, and here cultivation alternates with olive groves, scrub and mulberries. It is a great region for the silk industry, and there are villages in which every house has rooms set apart for the silk worms and cocoons, and where no little courtyard or doorway is complete without a girl or two spinning, spinning and for ever spinning.

At its southern end is a small land-locked harbour, so beautifully sheltered and so perfectly hidden, that one wonders why no stately city of ancient times has reared itself on its picturesque shores. Here, surely, Sappho might have come for a change from fashionable Lesbos, or travellers from Athens might have called there on their way to Alexander's Capital. But it seems they did not, for there are no ancient ruins to tell of grander days, and it was left for me to appreciate Port Kupho by making it the advanced base for the motor launches which combed the adjacent waters in their war against submarines.

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Xerxes had disliked these very solid prongs, for in his efforts against the Athenians he had attempted to cut canals across their northern ends, to avoid the perilous sea passage below frowning Athos for his troops and transports. Traces of his canals remain, but whether he ever finished them I know not.

The whole place reeks of antiquity, and even when on landing on Langos I had passed the time of day with some peasants tilling the soil, they had shown me a handful of copper and silver coins with the image and superscription of Philip of Macedon, which they had come across casually in their ploughing. They had readily exchanged them for other coins more recently minted, and both sides to the transaction had been well content.

It was in this quiet Gulf, then, with its blue and wooded boundaries, over which, to the north-west, towered snow-capped Olympus, home of the ancient Gods, that this spick and span British torpedo boat, with the pleasant hum of modern machinery, cut through the waters upon its inquisitive way.

Presently she dropped anchor off Muliani Island, about half-way up, and here we landed to visit the monastery farm. The island belonged to the monks, and they used it to obtain the produce of the farmyard, so difficult to conjure from nature without the help of females. Here hens were allowed, also goats, and some two or three women were to be seen pottering in the farm. Monks were

also sent here from time to time, as a relaxation and a change from their gloomy peninsula.

A handsome young monk with a black beard received us cordially, and did the honours. He was intelligent, and a brisk conversation ensued through an interpreter. Everything, according to our host, was going splendidly, and the British were both the saviours and the masters of the world.

He produced a letter he had recently received from his brother, a young Greek soldier then just drafted to the Salonika front with the Venizelist army. It made a great impression on me, as a remarkable epistle for a Greek private soldier, and it illumined both the Greek attitude towards the War and their national character. If my memory serves, it ran thus:—

Greetings, my dear brother! I am here in the trenches like a Greek warrior of old, even like Achilles, to do battle against the barbarians.

I think always of those ancient heroes, my countrymen, and I know that my sword will prevail and will cut the enemy in half. Yes, the Sword of Hellas will smite the wicked, and the heathen shall fall before us. We walk in the footsteps of the heroes, and we shall do mighty deeds. God be with you, my brother.

The Greek troops, then, at least had tradition, and I regarded them differently from that day.

But it was time to visit the Bulgarian monastery, and slipping across the Gulf once more we landed at the pier, where we found gaily caparisoned mules waiting to take us up the five miles of steep and winding path to the medieval fastness.

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In the exhilarating air of a perfect morning, with blue sky above and glimpses of the deep blue sea appearing ever and again below the wooded hills, we climbed the winding mule track which led through enchanting country. At last, amongst cypresses and pines, we reached an eminence where the monastery stood revealed. It was an unforgettable scene, for the great grim building, with its towers and cupolas, seemed to take one straight back to Norman days, when strong castles were essential to peaceful residence. Here was a castle firmly set on a little plateau amongst the hills, well capable of maintaining a long and spirited defence.

Even as we gazed, the chimes of its bells rang out in welcome, and, as the great oak doors slowly opened, the Holy Abbot, with two monks in attendance, advanced in state to meet us.

The greetings which ensued, and the ceremonial partaking of refreshments, were strictly in accord with polite custom in the Near East. A tray, borne by a monk, makes a tour of the visitors. It is as well to know what to do when the formidable array is handed, otherwise one may be seriously embarrassed.

First, a piece of Turkish delight may be eaten with the fingers. Then, taking one from a glassful of teaspoons, you must plunge it into a pot of jam and eat a hearty mouthful. Disposing of this sticky spoon in a receptacle, you then drink a glass of water, and finally one of a colourless and quite delicious liqueur, possibly a product of the monas-

tery. The bearer of the tray stands patiently before you during the whole proceeding. You must not worry about him, as he is used to it, and when you have finished he will move on to the next guest, and so round the circle.

Each part of the ceremony has its significance. First the sweetmeats, to restore the energy of the weary traveller; then the water to quench his thirst, and lastly the spirits to loosen his tongue for pleasurable conversation. Coffee is the final symbol, to stimulate for the journey to come—in fact, the bringing of coffee may be a hint that it is time to depart.

In our case, these preliminaries led to a confidential conversation with the Abbot, who had a look in his face which made one wonder if he was really the gentle, single-minded individual one might expect to find as the leader of a great group of men who had renounced the pomps and vanities of this world, and given their lives to God.

It doubtless takes time and experience to read character from faces so completely muffled by a wealth of beard and moustache as are those of the monks, for one of their vows is never to shave or cut their hair, but I am bound to say that while some had the innocent look of gentle and guileless old men, other faces gave an impression of evil.

The Father Abbot told us that, while they were nominally a Bulgarian foundation, their sole function was religious, and he solemnly assured me that his monastery took no part nor interest in the War. With this we had to be content, and, as we declined

his hospitable invitation to stay the night, or at least to partake of the midday meal, we now set out upon the tour of the monastery before taking our departure.

The chapel was something to dream about. Quite small, and square in shape, it gleamed like a beautiful jewel. Silver and gold shone wherever one looked. Great lamps of silver filigree work, with gold inlay, hung from the ceiling, and not an inch of wall space but was covered in precious icons, framed in elaborate gold and silver cases, often with doors for the better protection of the primitive Saint or Virgin within. Memory does not serve me to describe this chapel in detail. I have seen many of them, and they are all much alike; the impression remains of being inside some wonder place whose pearly beauty belongs not to this world, but somehow recalls the golden city pictured in the Book of Revelations.

By way of contrast, we then passed through white empty corridors to the bare refectory with table and benches, and a lectern where a chapter of the Bible would be read while the monks enjoyed their repast; thence to the brain and centre of the monastery, the library.

This was a smallish room, the walls entirely covered with volumes, and it was pervaded by the musty smell of old books. When we had duly admired it, one of the monks remarked, as if it were an after-thought, that the more precious books were kept in an inner and secret library. Would we like to see it? We would.

A bookcase in the corner was then swung back on hinges, revealing a small steel door, which in turn led to a narrow staircase. Up this we clambered, and found ourselves in a room similar to that below, still more musty, and lined with volumes of an even more faded and ancient-looking brown than those below.

I was invited to sit at a table, and a heavy illustrated Bible was set before me. It was one of the earliest printed Bibles, and came from Vienna in the fourteenth century. I found much to admire in the woodcuts of Jonah and the Whale, Jacob and his Ladder, and so on, but I noticed that impatient hands of monks with rather black fingernails kept thrusting over my shoulder and turning the pages to some new illustration. It was as if they did not wish me to dwell too long on Jonah or the quaint portrayal of his fishy friend, and looking up to see whence the hands came I met a sea of faces. At least a dozen monks must have followed silently up the little staircase, and were now crowding behind. The hand turned the pages back and back, pausing at last at the first illustration.

With something of a shock, for one does not expect nudes in a monastery, I perceived this to be a woodcut of Eve in the Garden of Eden conversing with the Serpent. She was innocent even of a fig-leaf, for the period illustrated was that before she and Adam knew that they were naked. I turned once more and saw those pairs of eyes rooted upon the mother of mankind. At

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last I understood! Poor monks, divorced from all things feminine, this was their opportunity!

Soon we bid our farewells, and, after visiting two more monasteries, the Russian and that of Potamos, set forth on our way homeward to Salonika.

Chapter Twenty-three

WINTER AT SALONIKA

THE winter of 1917-18 at Salonika was an exceptionally cold one. Deep snow lay on the mountains, and frequently the harbour was covered with a thin sheet of ice when morning broke. The troops must have suffered severely, and General Rycroft told me he had issued five blankets per man. The hospitals seemed as full as ever, and the task of the nurses and V.A.D.'s can have been no sinecure.

The 49th General Hospital, perched high up on the slopes of Mount Hortiac in a vain effort to avoid the malarial mosquitoes, had its tents blown down one night in a snow blizzard. It must have been a curious sight, young women in night attire and gumboots tugging away at tent ropes and hammering at pegs, in a frantic attempt to keep some cover over their patients, while the wind whisked their garments about them and the snow beat in their eyes.

In spite of it all, a cheery optimism pervaded these gallant ladies, and they laughed off their hardships and seemed to enjoy them.

What the British soldier was thinking I cannot tell. To all outward appearances his morale was high. I was struck, whenever I encountered them, by the men's smart and cheerful demeanour. They appeared to accept war as the inevitable and only

possible mode of life, and, despite its monotony, and always excepting moments of intense danger such as advances or heavy shellfire, much less frequent here than in France, I believe they enjoyed it.

The men of my own ship, well fed and with comfortable nights in their warm hammocks, longed, I know, for more arduous service. Their cushiness was their only ground for complaint.

The officers at the front were bored beyond endurance, but set their teeth and went on with it.

The yeomanry had a pack of hounds, and hunted wolves near Lake Doiran, and the two corps of which our army consisted vied with each other with their pantomimes, their boxing, and their football.

Those at the base, connected with G.H.Q. fared better, I fancy. There was a certain amount of snipe shooting in Micra Bay, and unlimited duck and geese in the Vardar marshes for those who could wangle a boat or a car or get there somehow. The Officers' Club, a French institution, but thrown open to officers of all nationalities, furnished an excellent dinner at a moderate cost, and then there was the White Tower Restaurant, always crowded, for the evening's entertainment. Here, in the manner of the near East, singer after singer would appear, do her turn and vanish with a bow, to be replaced by another. Some would be cheered and listened to, others ignored. It didn't seem to matter much. The audience, or a large section of it, came mainly to rag. They shouted

at one another, threw things, and climbed about from one box to another; or, if they liked the particular Mimi or Fifi who was occupying the stage at the moment, magnanimously joined in her choruses. Nor did Fifi greatly care. If she could show herself, someone in that great crowd of sex-starved men was sure to want to talk to her, and champagne could be sold for the management.

Of other and more sinister places of entertainment I cannot write at first hand, for as S.N.O. it was impossible for me to visit them even had I wished to, and my own officers were reticent on the subject. But I imagine there was nothing very different from the usual *boite-de-nuit*, where young women of doubtful looks, but of morals that left no doubt, sat sadly at little tables moistening their lips, and contributing hectic and forced laughter to the gaiety of warriors down from the front, determined to make a night of it.

For myself, I found the life enjoyable. There was plenty to keep one busy, and no lack of recreation. Shooting, tennis, or exploration of the district, all were possibilities. Yet I felt the days were slipping away, and personally I was achieving very little. Commanding a mere depôt ship, with nothing but a few ancient guns, my chance of doing anything worth while seemed to grow more and more slender.

All large warships, and not a few merchantmen, now carried paravanes, and therefore I felt that, though unrecognized as their originator, my efforts were not entirely fruitless. Nevertheless, my am-

bition had been to control the armament of a big ship in a great sea battle, or to deal the enemy a deadly blow in some small craft. It was to that end that all my thought and all my peace training had been directed, and, by the irony of fate, my war had had to do mainly with mines, first in providing an antidote, and then in laying them. It was in reconnoitring a minefield that I had been shot down, and by a German mine I had been blown up! Now, even my mines had been taken from me.

How to get out of this side-track, and return once more to the main stream of naval activities from which my own brainwave had torn me? I thought of the example of well-known officers, who had made a point of being in every war since they had been in the Service. The Benin Expedition, the Boer War, no matter what it was, no matter where they were—they had somehow contrived to be in them all. But I knew not how to control my destiny, and the days, full of events, though without much fighting, left little time for pulling strings.

Chapter Twenty-four

THE VITAL OFFENSIVE

FATE, however, was destined to keep me on the move, even if it did not provide the opportunities I hoped for.

Sir Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe had for some time been in command of the British forces in the Mediterranean, and had been allotted the task of controlling the anti-submarine measures of the whole of the Allied forces in that sea. The French Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Gauchet, though still in supreme command, was thus free to devote himself to the maintenance of his battle fleet, which had to be ready to meet the Austrians in the event of their issuing from Pola.

Amongst Sir Arthur's numerous staff at Malta was Captain Stephenson, already mentioned in these pages, whose fiery zeal to destroy the deadly submarine had led him from the organization of the original hydrophone-hunting in the Ægean to the founding of a school at Malta to train men in the new art.

Every one knew that the great majority of submarines worked from Pola and Cattaro in the Adriatic, and Stephenson advocated, with all the forcefulness of which he was capable, a hydrophone barrage across the Straits of Otranto, at the entrance to that sea.

Defence lies in attack, he argued, consequently,

not being able to attack the submarines actually in their base, we must do so close outside, where we know they must pass on their journeys to and from it. The barrage he advocated meant, of course, that convoys would be sadly denuded of escorting vessels, for to be effective it would absorb some hundred and fifty craft of various kinds.

Whilst the policy was still undecided, Stephenson slipped home, only to learn on his arrival at the Admiralty that it had been turned down. He managed to see Sir Eric Geddes, however (then First Lord of the Admiralty), and pleaded for his scheme. Sir Eric was undoubtedly impressed, and the Admiralty revised their conclusions, gave their support, and promised largely increased forces.

I was required, in the *Latona*, to organize and command the advanced base at Corfu.

The Otranto barrage was only one of a number of similar enterprises. The authorities at home were straining every nerve to attack the submarine by any and every possible means. Their blood was up, and, though they felt unsure of the issue, they meant to fight it to the last man.

Of all this, however, I knew nothing, and when, on the 12th March 1918, I was ordered to hand over the command to Captain Olivier of H.M.S. *St. George*, and return in *Latona* to Mudros with the torpedo boats Nos. 17, 18, 29, and 30, I had no idea what was in the wind.

At Mudros the new plan was revealed to me, and with H.M.S. *Aquarius*, a water-distilling ship, and H.M.S. *Bacchus*, intended as a hydrophone

repair ship, added to my squadron, I sailed for Corfu by the Corinth Canal a day or two later.

With mixed feelings I had bidden farewell to Salonika. I had made many friends there, amongst them that delightful old Breton sea dog, the French Admiral Merveilleux de Vignaux. He was a fine officer of the old school, rugged and picturesque in appearance, with a long grey beard which blew out sideways in a breeze. He had made co-operation easy.

"Leave the harbour organization to me," he had said, "and concern yourself with the approaches and with hunting submarines. Whatever torpedo craft I have available are entirely at your disposal for that duty."

He certainly kept his part of the bargain, for not only did he lend me a French submarine to practise on, but his workshops made hydrophones to our design for his destroyers, two of which used to come to sea with me for a hunt.

While Sir George Milne, the British Commander-in-Chief, had been kind and courteous, I had not seen very much of him. The command of an army left little time for a junior officer whose duties did not impinge upon high strategical and tactical matters. In these he dealt, of course, with the Admiral at Mudros.

My chief contact with the British Army had been with General Rycroft, who had laid himself out to be kind. We had dined together, sometimes shot together, and he made a point of bringing the Navy into every activity of the base. Indeed,

THE VITAL OFFENSIVE

the entire British Salonika force must have blessed him, for he spent the whole of his time securing not only the efficiency, but also the comfort and general amenities of both officers and men.

I regretted leaving these warm-hearted friends, but from a Service point of view I was not sorry to go. Important though the Salonika army was, from the naval aspect it was a backwater, with little hope of active work. To have a hand in a new offensive seemed a much brighter prospect, and with renewed hope of stirring events I guided my squadron to fresh fields and pastures new. The result of the War, and with it the fate of many nations, hung on the submarine problem. At last we were awaking and tackling it on a large scale. The great fleets lay inert, solemnly watching the small fry decide the issue. Fortunate he whose lot was cast with the latter.

Chapter Twenty-five

CORFU

ON the 22nd March 1918 the *Latona* and her consorts, steaming through calm and leaden coloured seas, wound their way northwards amid the rocks and islets, and came to anchor in the roadstead of Corfu.

To the west towered the old Venetian fortress, now occupied by a small British garrison, and under its shadow lay the town.

Close to, in the harbour, were moored the battle-ships of the French fleet, and further north were French cruisers and destroyers. The water was alive with stumpy French steamboats plying between the ships and the shore.

To the north-eastward stood Vido Island, a jumble of storehouses, chapel and ruined Venetian fort. Far away to the east and south stretched the blue and lovely mountains of Albania, whose jagged and sometimes snow-covered summits melted here into cloudland, there into the paler blue of the eastern sky.

This Corfu, so charged with history, so steeped in legend ever since Ulysses discovered the comely Nausicaa bathing in the stream, is claimed by many to be earth's most beautiful spot, and the many are not far wrong. It is a straggling, narrow island, some forty miles long from north to south, and lies about three or four miles from the Albanian

coast. It is mountainous throughout, but particularly in the north, and thickly wooded.

Who does not know the leonine old fort frowning from the citadel, in its amber pelt of old stone, or the curving sweep of the bay to the south of it, where stood of old a Greek city, and where Ulysses' isle still stands sentinel? A little gem of an islet, with its cypress-guarded chapel. These more obvious beauties have been repeated in a thousand pictures, and there can be scarcely anyone to whom their features are not familiar. Who has not heard of the Achilleon, that famous but gaudy palace which the German Kaiser acquired from the Empress of Austria in the years of his greatness preceding the War, when the "Drang Nach Osten" drew him in frequent journeyings to the East.

My thoughts turn rather to its less-known beauties, and its less-trodden spaces. To Govino, for instance, a tiny harbour a few miles to the north of the main anchorage. Here, entering between a rocky point and a toy islet, one finds a circular harbour about the size of the Round Pond of Kensington Gardens. Olive groves surround it, and a steeply rising country stretches back to hills and mountains beyond.

In an open space among the olive groves there is a Venetian villa, whose brown tiles and bare, twisted woodwork speak of age and sunshine. Big trees cast shadows on its roof, and its veranda is shady. It has known many occupants, amongst them British submarine officers whose boats worked

from Corfu. Later it became the Officers' Club for the flotilla of American submarine-chasers. I get a cool, pleasant feeling when I think of this place, and see with the eye of memory, wandering in the long grass amongst flickering shadows, a slim Greek child in the Corfuot dress, her hood over her head. She carries a long wand, and gravely shepherds a flock of turkeys which are her charge.

Then, in imagination, I climb the winding road past sleepy villages, arriving at last on the west coast, where high cliffs confront a restless sea. Here a rugged promontory juts out into the blue, and on it stands a monastery, weather-beaten and ancient, its yellow masonry contrasted by the deep green of orange trees. It is Angelo Castro, where a handful of monks, of gentle but rather vacuous countenance, gaze ever out to sea. They are but a survival of the Church's greater days.

A fresh north-westerly is blowing, painting the sea deep blue, and marking the yellow shore-line of the sweeping bays to north and south with a fringe of white. The murmur and sighing of the sea is the dominant sound, broken sometimes by the hum of insects or the bleat of a goat.

Now I turn to Couloura, a little promontory on the east side, where the channel narrows and Corfu comes close to the Albanian mainland. The coastline is precipitous, yet completely olive-covered. At the tip of the promontory is a flat place, just above sea level, and on it stands a white house, once the residence of the Venetian official

who guarded the northern approach. It is surrounded by a garden of roses. Both it and the garden walls are whitewashed, and shine in the sun. They have that look of thick solidity which spells internal coolness, and immediately behind rises a group of tall, dark cypresses, both they and the house reflected in the sea. Just round the corner, and under its very shadow, a tiny circular breakwater makes a safe place for a boat. A Greek family lives here, and the daughter of the house, usually to be seen in a white sailor suit, was wont to spend her days on the terrace gazing through a long and ancient telescope. Later, she married one of my officers.

Across the narrow strait, just opposite Couloura, was the mouth of the Butrinto River, a place to be avoided after sunset, for malarial mosquitoes swarmed there; but in daylight hours a paradise for fishermen. One had only to troll with a feather or a piece of white flannel, and the 'bar' would come for it like tigers.

Between Couloura and Ypso, there is a series of sandy bays sheltered by high cliffs, where sea bathing at last achieves perfection. The water is as transparent as glass, and bubbles as you cleave its surface. The rocks are smooth and steep, so that you can dive off them. There are shady caves to swim into; one, in particular, whose entrance is so low that a boat cannot get in. A swimmer can, though, and, once inside, he has the peculiar experience of seeing himself woad-coloured, for the cave is lit only by rays which have come through

the water, reflected off the bottom, and everything inside is blue.

Now, going south through the main town, we reach the more populous hill villages of the centre. The inhabitants wear the native costume, and in some of them the girls enliven their appearance by weaving bright red ribbons into their hair, giving a kind of chessboard appearance.

A curious custom prevails here. A red scarf hanging from an upper window indicates a marriageable girl within. Her family is open to offers!

My purpose at Corfu was to create a base for the Otranto barrage, where its numerous craft might slip in for a couple of days of rest and recreation, while they filled up with water and provisions, and had their minor repairs seen to.

Having made a rapid inspection of possible sites, I settled upon Ypso Bay as the most favourable position, since the main harbour was already monopolised by the French. It was a foregone conclusion, as it was the only place left with sufficient anchorage accommodation. It had water, and there was a flat space where the kite balloon station, an important part of the base, could be erected.

Work started at once. A labour corps of Maltese arrived, and were housed under canvas. Hangars and officers' quarters grew like mushrooms. Machinery arrived and was installed. A second camp site was hacked out of a rocky hillside, for the supernumerary officers and men who poured

in upon us. A collier and a small oiler joined our forces. The *Aquarius* distilled water, and some other ship, I forget which, baked bread. A long stone pier crept out from the shallow beach, and its solidity caused the Greeks to remark that the English expected the War to last a hundred years. A tennis court was made. Kite balloons came, with sloops of the Flower class to tow them. Destroyers arrived, loaded with depth charges, to act as 'killers', and, in a wonderfully short time, what had been nothing but a peaceful, deserted bay became an advanced war base, and the barrage was born.

There was one serious danger. Ypso Bay was said to be full of malaria, and to counter this a doctor had been working with a small party of men ever since we arrived, killing off the young mosquitoes while still in the egg. This was done with paraffin, a little being poured on every sheet of stagnant water which could be found, and wherever there was a running stream a tin with a hole in the bottom was allowed to drip paraffin continuously into it. We flattered ourselves that this accounted for our having only one case of malaria during the whole summer.

Some two hundred and thirty vessels, sloops, destroyers, torpedo boats and trawlers, took part in the Otranto Mobile Barrage, and they all poured into Corfu as often and for as long as their Sea Master, Captain Stephenson, would allow.

One of my first discoveries was that the little wine shops in the district needed severe overhaul-

ing. They sold the most vile spirit, which took instant effect on inexperienced young sailors, and having once discovered two of these, apparently dead drunk, but in reality poisoned, lying upon the high road, I paid a call upon the Greek General commanding. The result surprised me. Within twenty-four hours all the spirits had been removed from the inns and taken into Corfu town, where, a day or two later, they were sold by public auction, and an area was established, with Ypso Bay as centre, wherein no spirits were allowed. Thus, with hearty goodwill, was my modest request that the inhabitants should be forbidden to sell spirits to sailors complied with.

The French, too, were not backward in hospitable endeavour, and extended to us an invitation to make use of their efficient medical arrangements, which ensured the French sailors adequate female society without danger of impairment of their fighting efficiency.

The Italians alone held rather aloof. They had a cavalry regiment and a band here, together with several hospitals and rest camps, and they maintained a polite but distant attitude. Their policy of peaceful penetration was not lacking. I was told that they fed the school children with good Italian bread, and somehow contrived that maps, on which Corfu and Italy were painted the same colour, should hang upon the schoolroom walls. Personally, I found the Italians charming, and the Commandant of an Italian rest camp near Ypso Bay, a dug-out Colonel named Bottaco, was for me

a delightful friend and companion. But their official attitude of over-emphasized conciliation was distasteful to British minds. After all, we ourselves had owned Corfu not so long ago, and had made a present of it to Greece because we thought it should be Greek. The idea that it ought to be Italian made no appeal to us.

As for the Serbs, who also had a few troops here, as well as a hospital and rest camp, they were too poor and too disintegrated to count for much. It may be remembered that, in the earlier stages of the War, when Bulgaria had attacked them in the flank, whilst Austria was hammering at their front, they had been driven right out of their own country, and what remained of their army had gone, part to Salonika, the remainder to Corfu. Here, emaciated by under-feeding and the exhaustion of a long retreat, ravaged by malaria and dysentery, they had died off like flies. These unfortunate but gallant soldiers had to be buried at sea, for lack of labour to dig graves, but, owing to the shortage of iron and other heavy material, the corpses had been insufficiently weighted, and after a few days they began bobbing up to the surface like ghostly messengers from a phantom army, crying for vengeance for the rape of their unhappy country.

When I called on the French Commandant, I found him, a fierce-looking, red-faced soldier, with bristling moustaches sitting in the mess with his brother officers. The talk was of his adventures at the front in France, and of terrific feats of endurance in Morocco.

The Italian General, ensconced in an old fort to the north of the town, was coldly polite, and anxious to be rid of me. He was the senior military officer on the island, and wished this clearly understood. The Greek General, who received me in his home, was friendly and natural. It was not long before he was relating how, in a previous campaign against the Turks, he had captured the fortress of Janina, and this story he repeated on many subsequent occasions.

By contrast, when I called upon the Serbian General, I found his headquarters to be a bare, almost empty room in a small house in the town. A dingy and hollow-cheeked sentry stood outside the door. Shown into the General's presence, I found him deep in the study of a German grammar. He explained that his German was not very good, and he liked to keep his mind active. It seemed there was nothing better for him to do. He was a pathetic figure, worn out by the campaign, and a few months later I assisted at his requiem mass. He had gone to his Valhalla.

One might ask why all these military contingents were at Corfu. The answer is international mistrust and jealousy. The French had occupied the island with a military garrison when they brought their fleet here in 1916. They mistrusted the Greeks! The Italians at once sent a contingent so as not to allow any pretext for a subsequent French annexation. Indeed, they had a fair excuse, for they held, loosely it is true, the left or western part of the long line which extended from the

Adriatic to the Ægean. There were few troops opposed to them, but their sector was a long one. Santi Quaranta, a port in Albania just north of Corfu, was their advanced base, and it was natural to utilize Corfu, so conveniently near by, to hold a few reserve troops, and to provide hospitals and rest camps. At all events, that was the obvious excuse, and it had some colour to it. If it should tend towards the ultimate establishment of the Adriatic as an Italian lake, so much the better!

The British contingent had been sent to preserve the effect of a united Allied movement, and so that the British flag might not be left out in the gay flutter of Allied ensigns. They had probably been asked to come by the French. It is difficult to find a military excuse for the British garrison, but politically its usefulness was obvious.

As for the Serbs, they were there because they could not help it. Serbia was the poor cripple of the international party; with bandaged head and arm in sling, she hobbled round, accepting such alms as she could get from her allies who had allowed her to fall into this pass. But she held her head high, and the sacrifices she had made earned her the respect as well as the commiseration of her friends. Monsieur Passitch, the then Prime Minister of Serbia, conducted his government from Corfu.

Lastly, the Greeks. Well, Corfu belonged to Greece, and so perhaps it was natural that, since everybody was making free of their country, they themselves should not be entirely left out!

Into this band of brothers, who loved one another about as much as a mongoose loves a cobra, I was unceremoniously thrust, and very soon, troops being at a premium, now that the Navy had come the British garrison was withdrawn and a few marines substituted.

I was ordered to show the flag and entertain. To this end I was provided with a car, and instructed either to occupy the citadel or to take some house in the town on which the British flag could be flown. I did the latter, since the only accommodation in the citadel, formerly occupied by Colonel Pirie, the Commandant of the troops, now fell to the Major commanding the marine contingent.

My house was in the main street, where the ensign showed up well. I could not, of course, live there, for my most important duties were connected with the barrage, and had to be performed on board my own ship, twelve miles away, in Ypso Bay. I kept a small staff there, including a secretary and an intelligence officer, and with their help gave a few dinner parties. It was soon apparent, however, that, in spite of the long steamboat journey to Ypso, both high officials and their ladies infinitely preferred to be entertained on board ship. Here, therefore, were given a number of lunches and dinners, as well as afternoon entertainments such as aquatic sports.

Chapter Twenty-six

THE FRENCH FLEET

THE French Fleet was an interesting study, and, except for Major Huntingford, R.M.A., who was our liaison officer between the French and British Commanders-in-Chief, and who lived at Corfu, alternately shattering the French officers by the atrocity of his accent, and delighting them with his endless flow of jests and stories, there was probably no one who had better opportunities than myself for observing them.

It had been understood at the commencement of the War that, while we British took care of the German Fleet in the north, the French should take care of the Austrians in the Mediterranean. Unlike ourselves, the French under Admiral Boué de Lapéyrère had attempted to keep the seas continuously off the enemy's ports, just as Nelson of old had kept them off Toulon. They had soon found, however, that in modern ships, with their delicate boilers and machinery, and with submarines continually attempting to take toll of them, this was impossible. They had been driven back to Malta, very much as the Grand Fleet went to Lough Swilly, but while we remained in Lough Swilly for only a few days, the French found that Malta suited them well, and used it as a base for many months.

In 1915, however, they had moved their base to

Argostoli, a fine harbour in the Island of Cephalonia, some 80 miles south of Corfu. Subsequently, early in 1916, they moved to Corfu, which presented two great advantages. It was nearer the enemy bases, and the broad space between the island and the mainland gave room for the ships to do their gunnery practices without exposing themselves to submarine attack.

Once ensconced in this safe and comfortable roadstead, I do not think they ever left it, and I should imagine that, had the Austrians put to sea, and had the French battle fleet gone out to meet them, both sides would have found themselves pretty rusty in matters of manœuvre and station keeping. Gunnery, too, might have been a wee bit erratic, for the French did their practice at a fixed target, and there is a world of difference between trying to hit a stationary object on the one hand, and on the other a ship which is moving at a high and unknown speed on an unknown course.

Sacrificing one of their older cruisers, they had put her on the mud at a convenient spot towards the Albanian shore, and, with true Gallic *élan*, ship after ship would steam past, smothering her with practice shell. Her sad condition of disintegration was displayed to me with pride.

The Fleet consisted of eleven battleships, of which only two were of the *Dreadnought* type, six cruisers and a number of destroyers. It was now under the command of Admiral Gauchet, a dour, hard-working little Norman, who, though he had not the cachet of an ancient family, which counts

for a lot in the French Navy, was respected and regarded as somewhat of a martinet. Generally to be found in his cabin, dealing with mountains of papers, and issuing snappy instructions, he never left his ship except, I believe, on two occasions, each time to deliver the funeral oration of his chief-of-staff. During his time he wore out two of these devoted and hard-working officers, and the third barely survived the War.

Unlike the rather impersonal British funeral service where not even the name is ever mentioned, much less the achievements, of the departed who is being buried with such state and ceremony, the French really take trouble to make their funerals a personal tribute to the deceased. There is a formal oration, in which the deeds and character of the dead man are extolled, and the affection he may have inspired is touched upon. To me, the custom is human, warm and satisfying, whilst our own is the reverse. To French eyes ours is in harmony with the traditional character of the fog-bound, silent, unsympathetic Englishman.

Only the necessity of delivering the oration for his most immediate and personal assistant drew Admiral Gauchet from his ship, and even then he went no farther than the landing place, returning immediately on board while the long cortege filed off, to the sound of Dead March and Marseillaise, to the place of interment.

Since the appointment of the British Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Gauchet, nominally in supreme command, could now devote himself

almost entirely to the duty of keeping his fleet efficient and ready to fight the Austrians. That was quite enough for one man. There were, of course, some Italian battleships at Taranto ready to support the French, but so little did the French and Italians see eye to eye that I am quite sure Admiral Gauchet did not count on their help when formulating his battle plans.

I do not think Admiral Gauchet really believed much in the barrage, which depended for its efficiency on the still imperfect hydrophone. While ready to give it every assistance which did not interfere with his own main preoccupation, he was not prepared to make sacrifices for what he regarded at best as an experiment.

For instance, frequent convoys, bearing stores for the French Fleet, had to cut right through the barrage area on their way to Corfu. These interfered seriously with hydrophone listening—in fact, humbugged up the whole business. Captain Stephenson wanted the convoys to make a detour round to the southward, or alternatively to stop during the silent periods; or again, as a last alternative, to make the crossing by daylight at a pre-arranged time. I conveyed his request to the Commander-in-Chief, but Admiral Gauchet would have none of these schemes, since all of them involved extra risk to his convoy. His refusal did not mean that he would not co-operate with us, but simply that he regarded the maintenance ‘in being’ of the French battle fleet as more important than the barrage, and possibly he was right. Some

compromise was arrived at, which reduced the inconvenience as far as possible.

There has always been something curious, to my mind, in the difference between boarding a British man-of-war and a French one. As you approach a British ship, you may see the officer of the watch, the quarter-master at the gangway, the sideboys, and so on, preparing an adequate reception, according to the rank of the visitor. The boatswain's pipe blows its weird and doleful whistle, the sideboy dashes down the gangway, the check-line is thrown. You mount the ladder, arriving on the quarter deck, where not only the personnel on duty, but all others in the vicinity, stand ceremoniously still, and salutes are exchanged. If you are of Captain's rank, the Captain of the ship you are visiting will have made an effort to be on deck to receive you. Above you is the blue sky or the awning, as the case may be. You are emphatically on deck. The black pitch lines between the teak deck planks lead the eye aft to the ensign staff, where flutters the beloved emblem. The enormous grey guns, with polished muzzles, project from their massive steel turrets, and speak silently of mighty power. You walk aft and go below, where, in a white cabin with gay coloured hangings, your business, whatever it may be, will be conducted in that unrivalled spirit of good cheer and comradeship of which only the British seem to have mastered the art.

With a French ship it is otherwise. As you approach her, her high sides and massive super-

structures tower above you. There seems to be little open deck, and what there is is deserted; apparently no one has noticed you. You mount the ladder, seemingly still unobserved, and, passing through a doorway cut in the steel side of the ship,¹ find yourself in a crowded compartment. The quarter-master receives you respectfully, but the blowing of the traditional whistle, known as 'piping the side', is done apologetically, as if a good republican could only just bring himself to indulge in such nonsense. Probably an officer hurries up to receive you, but there is a great to-ing and fro-ing all round, and those not concerned with gangway reception take no notice of you.

No guns are visible. The deck is covered with shining linoleum. You are essentially inside a beehive rather than on board a warship; indeed, the smell of beeswax, used to polish the linoleum, is substituted for the tarry smell of a British ship. You are shown into the Chief-of-Staff's cabin; a bearded officer with tired eyes, and brow furrowed by worry and long hours spent over paper work, receives you. Probably a couple of French captains are present, and a voluble discussion has only ceased on your entry. After introductions they make polite conversation, or alternatively they may sit down and wait somewhat impatiently until you have gone, when you may be sure the talk will immediately recommence. I have always been amazed at the faculty some people possess of saying such a lot about such a little. It is admirable,

¹ Not always true of modern French ships.

provided one does not have to listen to it! The French are adepts at this—no wonder the Chief-of-Staff's brow was furrowed!

Now the Officer of the Watch returns. "The Commander-in-Chief will see you, please step this way." You pass through narrow and twisted passages, and enter the presence. The great man is seated at a desk piled with papers. He rises and receives you cordially. His observations are brisk; your points are seized immediately; he is obviously anxious to help where he can. The interview is quickly over, and the direct attack upon the problem in hand has been refreshing. One feels that here, in the centre of the beehive, is at least a decisive will, with a brain behind it. But with so much work obviously waiting to be done, it would be criminal to trade on politeness and prolong the interview, and you take your leave.

The hive has rather forgotten your existence, but after a little effort your boat is got alongside, and a formal departure, with quite a range of quartermasters, orderlies, and the like, is staged. When you get a hundred yards or so away, you turn to look, and find that it was not, after all, a beehive, but a warship!

Conversation, too, in the French messes contrasts strangely with the British mode. In a British naval mess a lady's name is rarely mentioned, and then only reluctantly and with respect. Conversation is patchy, mostly jokes and leg-pulls, anything to get a laugh, for good cheer is the soul of life. Talking shop is bad form, as indeed is any serious subject.

Sport, or the theatre, are really about the only safe topics. Anecdotes with a laugh at the end of them always go down well.

Now for the French. In the first place, the meal of greatest formality, to which a Frenchman will invite you if he wishes to do you honour, is *déjeuner*, a meal which most Englishmen hate, because any *déjeuner* indulged in on a reasonable scale incapacitates one for the afternoon. And what a *déjeuner* they give you! Starting with hors d'œuvres, probably something quite delicious made with *pâté de foie gras*, you go on to fish and an entrée or two, and arrive at the inevitable and delicious *poulet*. You may try a sweet, ending with some marvellous ice pudding, pale green with nuts in it. Each course has a separate wine; starting with a light red wine, you may alternate red and white, each a little older, a little more potent, and a good deal sweeter than its predecessor. At length comes the champagne, which bubbles cold and inviting into wide, long-stemmed glasses. But alas, it belies its promise, for it is sweet! Finally, black coffee, cognac, and long French cigars. It is a magnificent repast, but after it you are out of action for at least twelve hours. At such an entertainment conversation will be formal, and therefore meaningless, and it is only when you are, as I was, privileged to sit down to an informal meal in a French officers' mess, and when you have a sufficient mastery of the French tongue to understand the quick badinage which flashes to and fro, that it is possible to get into the real atmosphere.

On board the *Charlemagne*, the Flagship at Salonika, ancient history and classical legend were the dominant theme. One officer there, I remember, was a great student of the classics, and seemed to have impressed his intense love of them on the whole mess, for they talked of nothing else. The doings of Alexander, Sappho, or Socrates intrigued them mightily, and I remember an argument which lasted right through dinner as to whether Dido was really burnt on a funeral pyre when Æneas left her, or not. The authority on the subject finally established, to the satisfaction of all but a few malcontents, that it was a put-up job, and that Dido in fact lived on happily for many years after her supposed desperate self-immolation. The great thing, he concluded, wittily drawing a moral from the past to apply to the present, is somehow to acquire a reputation for having died gloriously, and to live to enjoy it.

In one of the Corfu battleships there was a different tone. Probably the officers were younger, or perhaps it just happened that the younger officers were more voluble. I could hardly believe my ears when one asked another in a loud voice across the table, "Well, and did you meet Miss —— this afternoon?"

Miss ——, I should explain, was an exceedingly pretty Greek girl in society at Corfu, and, I have no doubt, of irreproachable character.

"Oh, yes," replied his friend, quite unconcernedly, "certainly I met her, and I took her for a walk."

Noises from across the table, "And where did you go?"

Reply, "I took her into a little wood."

"Into a wood—yes, of course. And did you enjoy yourselves?"

"Ah, *mais naturellement!*"

A third officer then chipped in, "In that case, I shall not make my proposal of marriage to her Papa to-morrow."

At this juncture, an older officer sitting next to me explained, "You know, of course, that all this is nothing but blague. They do it to amuse themselves, and it means nothing. You may be quite sure that the Lieutenant never met the girl this afternoon, probably has never seen her in his life. *C'est notre façon de blaguer, c'est tout. Ma foi!*" he went on, "if we French performed a tenth part of the gallantries we talk about, we shouldn't be much good for fighting." I am sure he spoke the truth, but I felt sorry for the girl whose name was being butchered to make a Gallic holiday.

There was in the French Fleet a certain flag officer whose misfortunes were a source of keen amusement to all. For some reason or other he had got into the habit of taking strychnine, and this, while giving him unusual physical energy, gradually destroyed his mind. He believed himself to be getting younger and younger, and becoming more of an Apollo every day. Every morning he carried out arduous physical exercises, then stood admiring his nude and godlike torso in the looking-glass. Whether he called upon his staff to

admire it also, or merely told them of the progress he was making towards perfection of form, I do not know. He imagined himself irresistible to the other sex, and with the ceaseless chatter of French tongues soon became a byword in the Fleet. The matter had to be dealt with, and the French method of doing so was good, but the publicity was a tragedy. He was recalled to Toulon to take up an important appointment there, and left full of hope and happiness. But at Toulon he was taken charge of and put into an asylum, and, as far as I know, that was the end of him.

In general, the French officers were keen and gravely studious. They fretted at the long wait, just as our own did in the north, but they bore it stoically. They seldom left their ships, and then only to take exercise.

As for the men, they fell broadly into three categories. There was the Breton, a sailor from boyhood, spare, nimble fingered, and rather dull-witted except in anything concerning boatwork. He was an admirable seaman.

Then the southerner from Marseilles and the coast towns, dark-eyed, quick-witted, rather fleshy, and up to any kind of mischief. I may be wrong, but I would prefer the Breton to this type in an emergency.

Finally, the Algerians, great strapping fellows, swarthy and looking like overgrown boys, probably unintelligent, but good in a scrap, especially after a pint of *vin rouge ordinaire*.

The French played water-polo, and as the *Latona*

specialized in that game, we challenged the Fleet. I confess my heart sank a bit when, going on board the *Bretagne* for the first match, I saw their great swarthy team of black-headed rascals, who seemed to have been born in the water and lived there ever since. Corpulent fellows, well fleshed, built, if one may judge by the photographs of channel swimmers, on the right lines for rapid motion in water. Our own team were just little chaps, and their aggregate weight was probably about half that of the French.

The match was played alongside the ship, the goals being suspended from projecting booms, and the whole French ship's company watched how Britain comported herself, while these great human fish put the ball just where they wanted it, and sent the little Englishmen feet deep with a push from their heavy paws. But somehow they didn't quite get away with it, and though they got the score to 3—1, amid terrific cheers from their compatriots, our team, game to the last, managed to equalize in the final five minutes. It was a draw. The French seamen were bitterly disappointed. The officers did not seem to care much. To them a game was but a game, and, after all, there was a war on somewhere.

A return match was arranged, this time to be played alongside the *Latona*, and here the additional stimulus provided by the stream of cheers and instructions shouted by the ship's company, not one of whom would have missed the match for a hundred pounds, just tipped the scale, and we

THE FRENCH FLEET

beat them by one goal. After that, the little British cruiser did not feel so small amongst the French leviathans. The French team, having dressed, accepted my invitation to a drink, and came aft looking rather sheepish, but they soon warmed up and fraternized with our own men under the healing influence of beer and burgundy.

But enough of the French Fleet. I have made it clear, I hope, that they were brave fellows and excellent comrades, anxious to be friendly and to co-operate, but with an outlook and temperament naturally different from our own.

Chapter Twenty-seven

THE AMERICAN SUBMARINE-CHASERS

I MUST now tell of the coming of the Americans, for just as their entry into the War was of vast importance to the Allies, so was their reinforcement at Otranto a great matter for us.

The barrage had not been a going concern for long before Captain Leigh, U.S.N., on the staff of Admiral Simms, arrived to take stock of the situation, decided to instal a flotilla of submarine-chasers here, and requested me to find him a suitable base. I allotted him Govino Harbour. It was the only suitable spot, in many ways just right for the purpose. Its only drawback was that, since we had not intended to use it, we had not demoscutoed it to the same extent as the land surrounding Ypso Bay. It was too late in the season to do much, but by using the outer part of the harbour only, we thought the danger could be avoided, and this proved right.

Then came the flotilla under Captain Nelson, usually known as 'Juggie'. They had made a magnificent passage of the Atlantic, calling at the Azores and Gibraltar, and were very pleased with themselves. These American submarine-chasers were delightful little vessels. They were a development of the M.L.s.¹ which the Americans had built for us earlier in the War, but about three

¹ M.L.s: Motor Launches.

times the size. They had beautiful lines, and were very fast. They carried all kinds of hydrophones, strange to us, a gun or two, and an adequate supply of depth charges.

Their crews were really astonishing. I have never seen a finer body of young men. If they had been picked teams of athletes from Harvard and Yale they could not have been more impressive. All exceedingly good-looking, and with intelligence and keenness written on their broad-browed American countenances, they looked smart and virile in their clean white uniforms. They were, in fact, the pick of America's youth, out to do something in the Great War, and they had certainly chosen a pleasant manner of doing it. Scarcely any of them, I imagine, were professional sailors, just college men who were keen on the sea. Captain Nelson was a great character. He had distinguished himself as a midshipman during the Spanish-American War by swimming ashore, and, single-handed, destroying the guns in a Spanish fort which was about to be engaged by the American Fleet. The story goes that the American Admiral censured him for deserting his ship, and Juggie's reputation was made. I am sure he was a very adequate leader of the American flotilla, and equal to any pranks of his spirited personnel. On one occasion, I remember, he dealt with a mutinous sailor who had completely lost control of himself, and had probably gone off his head, by tying him to the mast and leaving him there till he quieted down.

The Americans organized their base in record

time, and were delighted with it. They asked me if I could build them a pier, and the civil engineer in charge of our own works, having looked into the matter, reported that it would take at least three weeks. This, however, was no use to Nelson. He was in a hurry! Forty-eight hours later he asked me to come and see his pier; with his own resources, and such wood as he could obtain locally, he had knocked up quite a tolerable little wooden pier, which lasted till the end of the war, and I was bound to say he made both me and my engineer officer look rather foolish.

I told Nelson about the fishing at Butrinto, and he lost no time in trying it. It was only natural for him to call on board the *Latona* to pass the time of day on his way to catch "long dogs" as he called them. Unfortunately for him, I had a rule, which was strictly enforced at the base, that no alcohol was allowed in any officers' mess before luncheon. This had seemed to me a wise precaution in view of the tendency to relax unduly during the rest periods at Corfu. I made no exception, even when foreign officers visited me on board my own ship.

At that time, rules were very strict in the American Navy, and no alcohol at all was consumed on board their ships, nor was any offered to visiting officers, but the British Navy in general was more hospitable. When, therefore, Juggie and his companions looked in in a friendly way, they were naturally hoping for something to help them sustain the long day of arduous sport which lay before

them. Their faces fell as we talked, until at last I had to explain the situation and apologize for my poor hospitality. It took Nelson some time to grasp that I of my own free will had tainted Ypso Bay with the curse which brooded so sullenly over his own Navy. It must have seemed barely comprehensible to him, and his face was a picture. I can imagine his thoughts; at all events, he never troubled to call in again on his way to catch "long dogs."

The American sub.-chasers hunted submarines with enormous zest, and the division never returned to harbour without claiming at least one or two. A kind of court of inquiry was held after each hunt to establish the degree of probability of a kill, and I fear the result was usually disheartening to the gallant officers who had been fighting the invisible enemy. Unless wreckage or survivors were actually picked up, the most favourable verdict one could give was 'submarine probably destroyed', and even to obtain this verdict the evidence had often to be looked at through rose-coloured glasses. It did not matter much, so long as the keenness of the hunters could be maintained. Each hunt gave fresh experience for the improvement of the next, and no more could be expected.

I have dealt with the work on the barrage elsewhere¹ and I shall not enlarge upon it here. It was indeed a strange form of warfare, when day after day you fought an enemy you never saw, and were never quite sure whether he was really there at all.

¹*Smoke on the Horizon*, Hodder & Stoughton.

BLAST AND COUNTERBLAST

Hydrophone noises were deceptive, and a ship hull-down on the horizon was, I am sure, many times mistaken for a submarine close by. On the other hand, the weekly sinkings of British ships were decreasing steadily, so that there was the strongest reason to believe in the value of our work.

Chapter Twenty-eight

ARMISTICE

IN the course of the summer, Sir Arthur Gough-Calthorpe found time to come and inspect the base. I showed him our various establishments, and he was good enough to express approval of our efforts.

Meanwhile, a new type of hydrophone, known as the 'fish', had been developed, and it had the advantage that it could be used by the hunting vessel without her stopping. She towed it some distance astern, but it was very delicate, and constant repairs would be necessary, for which purpose it was decided to replace H.M.S. *Latona* by a much larger ship. The old battleship *Cæsar* was chosen, and I was called to Malta to make plans for fitting her out. Not only was she to have repair shops, but her ample spaces would provide libraries and recreation rooms for the tired barrage personnel.

Whilst at Malta, I met an old friend, Commander Cottrell, R.N.V.R., who, as a high official of the Eastern Telegraph Company, assisted the Commander-in-Chief in the matter of submarine cables.

"I should advise you to get back to Corfu as quickly as you can," was what he said, and he would tell me no more. I got back, and found that the Battle of Durazzo had been fought during my

absence. This was a bombardment of the fortified harbour of Durazzo not very far north of Corfu, by a combined force of British and Italian cruisers under the command of Rear-Admiral Howard Kelly. A division of American sub.-chasers had taken part, and were delighted with themselves on their return, claiming to have sunk certainly one, probably two, and possibly three, enemy submarines. Though I have never heard that claim positively substantiated, there seems no doubt that there were enemy submarines present, and that the sub.-chasers attacked them effectively and at least drove them off.

Although we at Corfu did not know it, the War was drawing to a close. As far as I could see, from my little corner, a year's further struggle was the least one could expect. Not only was the barrage to be intensified, but plans were being made to base upon Corfu a flotilla of the new torpedo-carrying speed-boats, with a view to penetrating enemy harbours, Cattaro in particular, and this development promised thrilling adventures. Only quite recently the submarine war had been confronting us with terrible possibilities, and we looked forward to a long struggle before we could hope to master it. There was no reason for supposing the enemy's bolt was already nearly shot.

One day in August, however, Lieutenant Fremantle, an R.N.V.R. officer on my staff, made bold to say that the War would be over in two months. He refused to divulge his source of information, leaving me with the impression that he had a pri-

vate intimation from the Almighty, but his apparently absurd prophecy proved right, though how he knew I have never to this day discovered.

The 30th September saw the Bulgarian Armistice, and this was followed by the Turkish collapse a month later. Immediately Germany took steps to withdraw her submarines from the Adriatic. She must have known, though we did not, that Austria, too, was finished.

Before there had been time to prepare the *Cæsar* for her new duties, half the barrage craft were withdrawn and sent to the Dardanelles for minesweeping.

At this moment, when events were crowding thickly, I was informed by telegram that Captain Adams was to relieve me in command of H.M.S. *Latona*. As on a previous similar occasion, there was no intimation of my own future service, but hard on top of this came a wire from the Commander-in-Chief offering me the command of a Naval Brigade which was to be formed at Salonika to operate on the Danube under Admiral Troubridge. Needless to say, I accepted with alacrity, and on the 1st November, having turned over my command to Captain Adams, set out for Salonika, accompanied by my Secretary, Paymaster-Lieutenant Harris. We had arranged to do the first stage of the journey in an Italian 'Fiat' one-ton lorry, a very comfortable and convenient vehicle with pneumatic tyres and plenty of room for the luggage. The Italians had kindly placed one at our disposal.

Delighted at the prospect of a change, I had bidden farewell to Corfu, and had gone by steam-boat to Santi Quaranta, where the lorry was to be ready for us at dawn next day.

Only that morning, fragments of strange wireless signals had been intercepted. They were from the Austrian Fleet, and addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the British, French and American forces. One of them ran:—

The Yugo-Slav Fleet at Cattaro salutes the friendly Naval forces of the Entente, and requests that an American, French and English squadron may be immediately sent to Cattaro.

The reply was sent from the Supreme War Council at Paris:—

We invite you to come at once to Corfu under the White Flag, to put yourselves at the disposition of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces.

It certainly looked as if the Austrian Fleet had thrown up the sponge, and was acting very peculiarly, and in an amateurish manner.

That night Harris and I spent on board an Italian depot ship, in the placid harbour of Santi Quaranta. At midnight we were roused by a prolonged ringing of ships' bells, followed by the hooting of sirens. Then came cheering, and songs in chorus floating joyously across the still harbour. Guessing what it betokened, we dressed hurriedly and made inquiries. An armistice with Austria had been signed, and as far as Italy was concerned the War was over, and well won.

Fremantle's prophecy looked like coming right after all. Enemy nations were collapsing all round us, and now only Germany remained.

With a feeling of emptiness I realized that, in the Mediterranean at least, fighting was at an end. The life which, through four years of use, had become second nature, was over. One had to go back to some strange, forgotten mode of living, where submarines no longer assailed one, nor planes dropped bombs. Of course, I was glad—who would not be—at the triumph of our arms. But it was a sad form of gladness, for the flat feeling that the great days were gone, that the door of opportunity was now for ever closed, could not be put aside.

Santi Quaranta was a busy little place, clinging to a ledge where mountainous Albania plunged precipitously into the sea. Here was a huddled mass of buildings, filled with Italian stores. One single road led steeply away from the town, climbing at once into the wild uplands, where nothing was to be seen but range after range of rugged hills. My memory of this first hill is associated with the deafening popping of the exhausts of lorry convoys as they coasted down to the camp, their long journey from the front line over. Up it went Harris and I at early dawn, and all day long we travelled, always up or down, and frequently round hair-raising corners.

Late that evening we arrived at Goritzia, where the Camp Commandant allotted us quarters. Tired of being tossed to and fro by warring nations,

Goritzia had declared a republic, and had surcharged an issue of stamps. These were much in request, and it was generally believed they would become valuable. We each bought a set or two, but I have not yet met a buyer who is willing to give a decent price for them. One more night on the journey, and we found ourselves at Salonika, but this time without a ship.

We put up at the new British Hostel, which had somehow been conjured into being by General Rycroft since we had left, and where there were over a hundred beds for officers on leave or duty.

Meanwhile the Mediterranean was being scoured for sailors to constitute the Naval Brigade. No doubt the Austrian Armistice had affected matters, and it was now thought that a party of two hundred seamen would be sufficient for any work that might be thrown upon them. By threes and fours this party drifted in from here, there and everywhere, and in about a week my Brigade was complete.

Admiral Troubridge had been acting as adviser to the Serbian Government, and was well known at Salonika, where he lived. He had now received a commission from General Franchet d'Esperey to take over the naval control of the Danube. He showed it to me when I went to see him.

"It's a queer business," he said, "a British Admiral receiving a commission from a French General. Still, I'm going to do it."

I replied that my small force was under his orders, and since he was going to make the journey

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to Belgrade in his own car, I arranged to meet him there as soon as I could get transport for my sailors. General Rycroft was as helpful as ever, and promised me a convoy of Ford cars which he happened to have on hand. Petrol was the difficulty, since none was available either on the journey or at Belgrade, and it would be necessary to start off with enough fuel for the double journey of well over 2,000 kilometres. By the time allowance had been made for the sailors' baggage and the fuel for the lorries themselves, we found we had to take twenty-one good-sized lorries to accompany our seventy Ford cars. The General handed them over without a murmur!

Meanwhile, great events were galloping to a conclusion, and on November 10th we learned that at eleven next day hostilities against Germany would cease. To the duration soldier this meant simply everything. It meant that the War was over; that the Hun was beaten; that Britain had triumphed as she always triumphed; and that now every one would go home and take up that queer, quiet kind of life of the old days; that one must be looking for a job, and had better begin at once; that in fact, well, the War was over!

At the stroke of eleven a number of Greek soldiers, signifying their rejoicing in the usual way, discharged their rifles merrily in the air. A bullet from one of these climbed up and up into the sky, then turning, sped once more towards earth with increasing speed. It found the heart of a British Tommy, so that before the bells had ceased ring-

ing, and long before the sirens of the ships had ceased their hooting, or the excited men their cheering, this last and perhaps saddest casualty had added one to the number of the slain. But such an event, even had it been generally known, would of course have been no check to the general rejoicing.

The White Tower that night would surely stage amazing scenes, and so, determined not to miss them, I booked a box.

Harris and I had that day obtained from the Army Clothing Depot beautiful new khaki overcoats, lined with lambswool, to see us through the rigours of the Serbian winter. We wore them that evening, and on arrival at the theatre hung them on pegs inside the door. Soon the fun began. The audience, mostly French, determined that no singer should be heard that night, and no sooner had one appeared on the stage than they drowned her by hoarse singing of the *Marseillaise* or any convenient chorus. "Rock climbing" from box to box was a side-show, and only resulted in a few minor casualties, but the climax came when an attack was made on the stage, and the singer picked up and carried down into the audience. Immediately a British rescue party formed up further back in the theatre, and, moving swiftly up the gangway, charged the attackers, whilst on the stage appeared the manager, gesticulating violently. But though his lips moved, no sound could be heard from them, so terrific was the hubbub. We leaned forward, enjoying the magnificent impromptu. The battle surged this way and that, but at length virtue

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prevailed and the British recaptured the damsel and returned her to the stage, minus most of her clothing.

Well, the fun was over, and we turned to leave, but what had become of our beautiful coats? They had gone! A hurried search of the passage outside revealed no trace of the maurauder. Alas, we had been badly had. Amid the general madness of rejoicing, some villain had been cool enough to choose the precise moment to make off with the best coats. The War was over, but crime went on!

Chapter Twenty-nine

DEPRESSED COUNTRIES

The Ceres Road

Oh, you long, winding, white ribbon that sweeps
Away out from the town,
Winding up, winding down
Through the close-serried tumult and turmoil
of hills
That some giant has tumbled together;
man wills
You should conquer, and on, and so down
to fair Struma
And leap and away
To the land of pale rumour.

C.V.U. 1917. *Salonika*

TWO days later, in pouring rain, our convoy of ninety-two vehicles started for Belgrade. Moistly we crept out along the Ceres road, which wound north towards Bulgaria. This road at least had gained something amidst universal destruction, for it was now broad, smooth and fully metalled, whereas before the War it had been little more than a track, and this it owed to the British Army. In spite of the good road, we only did a paltry twenty kilometres, partly owing to numerous breakdowns, and partly to the fact that Gevesne, our own advanced G.H.Q., provided good accommodation, and formed a good starting point for the heavy journey across the front line.

Next day we climbed over the low hills, where artillery had supported the British line, then down

and across the Struma River by a bridge which had been promptly repaired as the Bulgarians retreated.

We were now in country which for two years had been the enemy's front line, and all around were traces of his occupation. Roughly-built dug-outs were everywhere to be seen, where, in the heat of summer and the tremendous cold of winter alike, the simple Bulgar peasant, turned soldier, had eked out a drab existence.

There had not been much fighting in this part of the line. The malarial nature of the Struma Valley discouraged it, and, except for outposts, both lines were withdrawn to the foot-hills well above the plain. Consequently they were here some three miles apart.

There was plenty of time to look round, for some of the Fords were still giving trouble, and the convoy was halting while they repaired.

The road was by no means deserted. Straggling and limping along by ones and twos, and sometimes in batches of a dozen or more, came women, carrying babies in their arms or dragging them along by the hand. Sometimes a man was with them, but more often not. If there was, he was bowed down under an enormous pack, containing the poor remnant of the family possessions. These were Macedonian families who had been cleared out of the fighting zone by the Bulgars, and were now on their way back to their homes.

At night they would camp by the roadside, finding such shelter as they might under a bit of sack-

cloth, or perhaps behind a rock. Their clothes were in rags, and more often than not they were barefooted. Hunger and want were written all over them. The years of exile and the struggle for existence seemed mercifully to have numbed them to physical discomfort. They expected little of life, and little enough they received.

The whole road to Belgrade was dotted with similar convoys, Macedonians moving south, or Serbs who had fled or been moved out of their own country, on the road north once more. To see them encamped by the roadside after dark, huddled together round a flickering lantern, or, if they were lucky, a small camp fire, wet and miserable, with squalling babies, when indeed they were not too far gone even to squall, tore at the heart strings. What had these poor people done to have to suffer thus? These grey-haired women with deeply-furrowed brows, and proud, aquiline noses; these gaunt, hollow-cheeked men, whose swollen feet were swathed in rags—how many must die before they could reach their homes? What hope was there for the children, exposed alternately to snow, rain and frost, shivering through the dank night, then tramping on unfed in the morning? What chaos, what magnificent disorganization! Just a by-product of war, and one of which the English people have fortunately no experience, but which in the Balkans is of frequent occurrence. Who wouldn't be a Macedonian or a Serb?

It took us a whole day to reach Vetrina, at the foot of the Rupel Pass. Before us loomed the

Belashitza Mountains, which from Salonika had always looked so sheer and blue, but now, as we wound about the foot-hills or followed the course of the Struma, looked much like any other mountain range. It was curious to look back towards Salonika, and see the Allied position as the enemy must have seen it, and to try to put oneself in his shoes and think his thoughts.

Bulgaria had backed the wrong horse. Ferdinand had every opportunity of entering the War on our side, and at one time it was thought he was going to, but all along, while Mr. Noel Buxton was congratulating himself on the results of his persuasive powers, Ferdinand had been scheming with Germany. It must have been a difficult decision, for to join Germany meant fighting against Russia, the protector of the Balkans, and on the side of the hated Turk. To join the Allies on the other hand meant fighting on the side of the even more detested Serbian. For a country unconcerned with sea power the appeal of the German alliance must, I should say, have necessarily outweighed the alternative, and probably the opportunity it gave of attacking Serbia in the flank, when her front was fully engaged with the Austrians, settled the matter. Bulgaria had seen Roumania well punished for throwing in her lot with us, and had doubtless felt cheered by the German occupation of that country. Turkey, too, had stood up to our strongest attack. But in the later stages, the exhausted Bulgarian regiments, whose appeals to Germany for modern equipment had no doubt been met by

excuses and regrets, saw themselves interminably facing well-equipped British, French, Italian and Greek contingents. Unless Germany could send them an army corps, there was no hope of advance for them, and Germany showed no signs of so doing. The most she had done in recent times was to send a crack bombing squadron. It had dropped its bombs, claimed its casualties, and gone back to Germany.

As supplies grew shorter and shorter, it must have dawned slowly on Bulgaria that an army which is supplied from the sea, provided its communications remain open, will always beat one which is bottled in as the central powers were. In spite of German boasts of the tremendous results of their submarine campaign, the Allied equipment remained first-rate; they did not appear to lack ammunition, and their motor transport seemed plentiful. Conviction must have stolen upon those in the know that they were lost unless a miracle happened. That is not a good foundation for morale! When in July a combined British, French and Serbian advance had been made, although the Bulgars put up a strong resistance at first, especially in the almost impregnable positions near Doiran, once the Allies had broken through they were done for.

Djumia was the first Bulgarian town we stayed a night at, and here we found a population outwardly trying to forget there had been a war. They proceeded about their normal avocations as best they could, pretending to ignore the khaki-clad

figures who strode so possessively through their streets; but you had only to speak to them to find them cowed and subservient, terrified of what would happen if they did not immediately comply with a request, and super-conscious of the fact that they were a beaten people.

The next day's travel brought us to Sofia, where a day's rest was taken for the overhaul of defaulting vehicles. Sofia was in the midst of the influenza scourge which was ravaging Europe, and was demonstrating man's futility by causing more deaths in a year than the warring nations had achieved in four. Great precautions were being taken. No one was allowed to sit down in a café; the chairs were piled in a corner, you took your meal standing, and went as quickly as possible. The trams had stopped running, for trams were sources of infection. The old king had gone into exile, and the young king was virtually a prisoner in his palace, now the vortex of a whirl of intrigue. Decidedly Sofia was not at that time a happy city.

Yet, on the morning following our arrival, it was gaily decked with flags; streamers stretched across the streets, making a brave show of national rejoicing. We inquired the cause of the Bulgarian officer who had been attached to attend to our requirements, and who spoke perfect English. He told us that two whole divisions which had surrendered and been taken prisoner in the recent forward movement of the Allies had now been released, and were marching triumphantly into Sofia that day.

Truly the human spirit is unbeatable. It cannot brook defeat, and seeks ever to salve its pride by persuading itself, whatever the result, that it has fought a heroic fight. The same is true of the spirit of a nation. Here were vast numbers of troops who had surrendered and been made prisoners, and through their action their country now knelt suppliant before its conquerors. The soldiers had been released as of no consequence, and sent home disarmed, yet the stricken city must rouse itself to cheer them as they came, must tell them that their country appreciated their sacrifices, and in telling them this persuade themselves that Bulgaria, outnumbered by the swarming hosts of the Allies, had fought a great fight, and that her soul remained alive.

We found at Sofia a British mission under Colonel Villiers-Stuart, dealing with the numerous questions which arose as an immediate result of the armistice. There were many other officers, each engaged upon some mission or other. One General, I remember, was organizing a scheme for distributing grain in Serbia, so that crops might be sown. The American Red Cross, largely a commercial undertaking, was already busy trying to sell the Bulgarians agricultural machinery.

It was cold, and Sofia was numb and depressing, so we were not sorry to leave it, and, amid a national rejoicing which resembled the dance of a skeleton, we proceeded on our way, with Nish as our objective for the night. This took us across the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier, where, as might be

expected, roads were terrible and bridges broken. We lunched at Pirot, reaching it after hazardous negotiation of a mountain pass, through which the greasy road sloped unpleasantly towards the edge, where gaped the precipice.

But these minor perils were soon forgotten, for Pirot had decided to feast us. It is one of those towns claimed by both Serbia and Bulgaria, but as far as we could see the feeling was entirely Serbian. Of course, our viewpoint was purely superficial, and doubtless there is another side to the question. Be that as it may, a feast was given to the officers, and another to the men, in a white-walled hall hung with brilliantly-coloured Pirot carpets. A toast of welcome was given by the Mayor, to which I responded. The inhabitants, so recently freed from the long Bulgarian occupation, related with glee how they had hidden thousands of pounds worth of carpets from the all-grabbing Bulgarians. The latter had hunted high and low, but had failed to find them. The carpets were walled up in a building so cleverly that the existence of the hiding place had never even been suspected. After lunch they took us round and showed us the place with pride.

I wonder Pirot carpets are not better known in this country. With their brilliant colours and pretty designs they have great decorative effect, but you must hang them on the wall, not put them on the floor, for they are woven and rather thin, and, having no nap, would soon wear out. Possibly one would tire of them quickly, and I am glad to

say that, frightened by the prices asked, I restrained myself from making a purchase.

We were late in getting away from Pirot, and a long and difficult drive lay before us, mostly to be done in darkness. Some miles ahead of the convoy, night having fallen, we wound down twisting roads to follow a river bed. I was sitting by the driver, and as we were crossing a bridge I suddenly caught sight of a gap five yards ahead.

"Stop!" The brakes ground on; we were just in time, for our front wheels rested on the very edge of the gap—six inches more and we were over. Beating a chastened retreat, we reconnoitred, and found a ford a little further along. It was axle deep, but we managed to get through, and, leaving a warning, went on to climb the mountain pass beyond.

Now our difficulties were added to by fog, and since one side of the road was nearly always sheer precipice, there was every reason for caution. The pace was reduced to a walk, one of us leading the way on foot with a torch, to ensure that the car should not, by one little mistake disappear over the edge.

One of the convoy did go over, and had to be abandoned. Exactly how it happened I do not know, but nobody was hurt. At last, as we descended to the plains, Nish began to show up, and before long we were making billeting arrangements for the men.

I was accommodated with a Serbian family, who received me with the greatest courtesy and hos-

pitality. The Serbian mental attitude was a delightful contrast to the Bulgarian, for here was a country which had endured unheard-of privations and had won through. Its army and its government had been driven right out of the land, and the people had been lived upon and oppressed by the hated Bulgarian, the tyrannical Austrian, and the unsympathetic German. But now, largely through the instrumentality of the British—and not forgetting President Wilson, who, in the eyes of the Balkan peoples at that time was as nearly God on Earth as any human being has ever been—everything had come right, the Bulgarian had been driven forth, and Serbia freed. Their armies which had fought so tenaciously had not done so in vain, and the people who had philosophically endured the hated occupation were regaining day by day all they had lost. True, the country was impoverished; its roads were in a dreadful state, its railways completely and maliciously destroyed; peoples' clothes were in holes; there was no petrol, no rubber, no coffee, no sugar, and very little bread. But none of that mattered, the future stretched gloriously before them, and hand-in-hand with Great Britain, Great France and Great America, Serbia would stride forward to a grandeur never before dreamed of, and in making the stride she would take care to plant her foot in the face of the ugly Bulgar who lay sprawling on the ground before her.

It was impossible for a Serb to find appropriate epithets for Bulgarians. If you mentioned them, all he could say was, "*Ces Bulgariens*——!" It

was just impossible to finish the sentence. There were no epithets in any language, let alone in French, which could possibly be applicable. A Bulgarian was, well—he was a Bulgarian, and when you had said that you had said all.

It was not surprising, then, that my host wished to show me hospitality and politeness. After presenting me to his family, he led the way to my room. It was the guest chamber, with red carpets and brilliant Serbian embroideries, and it had recently been occupied by a German Major. A tall white stove stood in one corner, and here a warm wood fire had been kindled. As we entered a boy was engaged in filling it to the top with fresh chopped wood.

My host pointed to a polished metal basin on a wash-hand-stand, and signalled me to wait. He could speak no French or German, and I no Serbian, so our acquaintance progressed by the language of signs. He left the room, and presently returned with a jug of warm water. I thanked him, and tried to take the jug from his hands, but he would have none of this, and made me hold my hands over the basin while he poured water over them and washed them, murmuring something in Serbian. I took it to be a ceremonial act of hospitality, and the feast he provided, and the energy of the boy who kept my stove filled all night, gave further evidence of a hospitable spirit.

Nish was not an inviting place, flat, straggling and drab, and we had no regrets a day later in bidding it farewell. We set out for Jagodina.

The country was now flatter, but of our adventures I have not the clearest recollection. I remember a snow-covered hill which the car would not climb, and how we tore bushes from the side of the road and held them under the wheels to give them a grip, running on and using them again as soon as the car stuck once more. Hot and exhausted, we arrived eventually at the top.

Then I recall a little river which had to be forded, as the bridge was broken. We pushed in, the water climbing ever higher and higher, and finally stuck in the middle. The car would go neither forward nor back. As luck would have it, however, a lorry coming in the other direction came to our succour, and, throwing us a rope, towed us out.

Again I remember a big river, which must have been the Morava, where the bridge was also in ruins, and here a boat ferry was working to take cars across. We had to wait our turn. While waiting, a Red Cross ambulance drove up, and halted beside us. Imagine our surprise when a very pretty girl of about twenty leaned over from the driver's seat and remarked, "I say, have you got a cigarette? I've run out." Fortunately we had one, so in the long wait for the ferry the acquaintance ripened and we learned her story. It appeared she was an Australian who had come over to do her bit, and had taken service with the Serbs, and here she was, happy as a lark, driving her ambulance entirely alone over great tracts of country, thinking life the grandest thing ever.

From Jagodina we went to Semendria, and this too had its interesting moments. It was suffering from bombardment, followed by prolonged enemy occupation, but must have been a fine town in its time, and beside it flowed the great Danube, so broad that the opposite shore was no more than a misty line. Here I was billeted in the house of a soldier's wife, who had several children and very few rooms. To qualify herself to appear on the list of officers' billets, for which there was doubtless an adequate remuneration, she had to make a room. She had contrived this by hanging up the family carpets so as to cut her largest room in two. I occupied one half of this room, and who was in the other half I shall now never know, but I judge it was her whole family, and a numerous one at that, for a buzz of feminine chatter, suppressed but persistent, went on till far into the night.

In the morning, my hostess brought me coffee, and began to be communicative. It appeared her husband was away, and had been away for a long, long time. She was very lonely. Not here, of course, but at Belgrade, where I was doubtless going, she would like to meet me again, at the Hotel So-and-So, in three days' time. She would be there. Would I not meet her? Then we could be even better friends, yes, no! Without much effort, I resisted the temptations of this surprisingly rapid Delilah, wondering whether it was a practice she had developed from billeting officers of various nationalities, or whether the Serbian gratitude to the English had prompted her to generous giving.

Explaining that I should be very busy at Belgrade, I thanked her and bade her farewell.

Soon, forward matrons forgotten, our convoy was ploughing along the most shell-torn road I have ever seen. Avoiding the steeper-sided holes, one had perforce to take those which the constant passage of lorries had smoothed out into comparatively shallow depressions. The cars rocked and rolled like ships at sea, moving at a snail's pace.

Doubtless much of this damage must have been done by the Austrians as they retreated, just as they had destroyed the railways and smashed the road bridges. It was a usual military precaution in a retreat, but senseless in this case when the game was up, and only adding to the immense bill for reparations with which the Central Powers must soon be faced.

Belgrade at last! The gloomiest, most worn-out looking city one could imagine. Sofia was luxurious compared with it. With half-melted snow on the streets, and a drab winter sky, it presented a scene of unrelieved depression. Though Serbia was at length victorious, the heart had been knocked out of her capital. Broken windows were repaired with pieces of board or not at all; the few shops that were open had little or nothing in them; a sprinkling only of people moved about, and they looked dull and lethargic. Suddenly relieved of pressure after three years of enemy occupation, the city lay gasping, unable to take in what had happened to it, like a fish returned to the water after ten minutes in the bottom of a boat.

But the Crown Prince was there, and Passitch was there, and the Government of simple-minded men, confronted with the task of complete reorganization, was beginning to stir up the life force which was soon to send the blood pumping more strongly than ever through Serbia's veins.

Admiral Troubridge had arrived, and had taken up residence at the Austrian Legation. Harris and I were accommodated there also, whilst our brigade found quarters in the military barracks, under Lieutenant Beresford. Now the men were here, the problem was what to do with them, the original idea of manning artillery for use against the Austrians being a little out of date.

Meanwhile, for a few days there was breathing space, and time to instil into them some semblance of an idea that they were a British Naval Unit landed for military duty, and must be an example of smartness and good discipline.

Admiral Troubridge was busy enough. He was in close touch with the Serbian Government, who, since he had shared the retreat with them, regarded him as a father and mother; and with the French high command, which, under General Franchet d'Esperey, had been established here ever since the enemy had crossed the Danube.

Belgrade lives by its river service, and the first thing was to get that going. Obviously, Admiral Troubridge was the man to do it, so the Minister of Finance, having made an appointment by telephone, strolled round one afternoon to see him. In his hand was a bag of gold pieces. This he dumped

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on the table, glad to be relieved of its weight, and with an airy wave requested the Admiral to use it to get the river service going. That is how Admiral Troubridge began his duties as head of the Allied Commission on the Danube. He retained the position until his death many years later.

Chapter Thirty

BUDAPEST

IT was not long before a windfall came my way too. After the Austrian Armistice, which was negotiated by General Diaz on the Italian front, Hungary had broken away, declaring itself an independent Power. This necessitated a new Armistice Convention, and it was arranged by General Franchet d'Esperey. The Austrian Armistice was in no way abrogated, but the second Convention applied particularly to Hungary in her new status. It contained certain naval terms, inserted, rather at haphazard, with the object of preventing Hungarian ascendancy on the Danube. Six Danube monitors, ten passenger steamers, ten tugs, and sixty Danube lighters were to be handed over to the Allies.

The General now wanted some naval officer to go to Budapest to enforce these terms. Admiral Troubridge proposed that I should go, and this was decided upon.

A French military mission, under Colonel Vix, had already gone to Budapest to enforce the terms of the Armistice as a whole, and it would therefore be necessary for me to work under him.

The Naval Brigade had to be left behind at Belgrade, an order having come from Allied Headquarters at Paris that no troops were to be sent to occupy enemy capitals. This order I believe to

have originated from a question asked in the House of Commons by a Labour member.

"Was it true," he had asked, "that the vanquished nations were being unnecessarily bullied by Allied troops occupying and displaying themselves within their capitals?"

It often happens that, to enable a satisfactory answer to be given to a Parliamentary question, of which notice has been given, frantic orders are telegraphed in all directions. Then the Minister can rise blandly and return an answer which puts the questioner entirely in the wrong.

In this case the new order caused disappointment to General Franchet d'Esperey, who was on the point of establishing his headquarters in Budapest itself, with a suitable contingent of troops. The order was unfortunate, for it encouraged the enemy to use every possible method to evade the fulfilment of his pledges.

Admiral Troubridge's last words of instruction remain in my memory.

"Remember," he said, "that we are still at war with Hungary. There has been an Armistice, nothing more. You will, of course, call on the President, but do not get too friendly with the Hungarians. They are charming people on the surface, and the Englishman's tendency is always to be over-sympathetic to the country he is in. You will be assailed by invitations, but remember, we are still at war."

With these injunctions, I departed with my mission, consisting of my secretary and two

Serbian officers as technical advisers, making the journey as far as Novisad by a Danube steamer.

The Danube was a new experience to me, but its broad smoothness, numerous islands and alternative channels soon became monotonous. The banks were low-lying, the weather misty, and the passing craft few and far between.

The town of Novisad, on the contrary, looked animated. Here was a place which had belonged to Austria-Hungary, and which, during the entire War, had been well behind their lines. Compared with Belgrade, it seethed with prosperity; the shops were gay, their windows full of goods, and the streets crowded. The whole town was brightly lit up at night. You only found out there was something wrong when you put matters to the test by entering a restaurant and ordering a meal. The fare was miserable, and very expensive.

The sympathies of the people here seemed divided. It was ethnologically a Jugo-Slav place, and there were many who rejoiced that it now found itself behind the Allied lines, and would in all probability be added to Serbia. Others, though guarded in expressing their opinions, clearly preferred the Austro-Hungarian regime, under which they had enjoyed prosperity.

We found the best hotel, and booked rooms there. It was a barn of a place, with bare boards, and wooden partitions separating the bedrooms. These, incidentally, contained little else but a bed. The hotel must have been used for military billeting ever since the beginning of the War, and pre-

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sumably everything, except the bare necessities stipulated by the town major, had been removed.

An amusing incident threw a side-light on the habits and customs of continental officers on campaign. I retired early, and to my surprise found, sitting on my bed, the housemaid who had charge of the bedrooms. She was very young, and exceedingly pretty, and appeared to think it quite in order that she should await me. We had no common language in which to converse, but, anxious to be rid of her, I waved her away, and, looking hurt and puzzled, she went. Half-an-hour later I heard a commotion. Harris had come upstairs, to find the persistent damsel asleep on his bed. Her duties were evidently comprehensive, and she took them seriously. He was furious, and, having sent the intruder packing, came into my room to vent his grievance on me. I had to point out that I was in no way responsible for the manners and customs in the Balkans, and that this was no time to indulge in stories of his nocturnal adventures. It was some time before the indignant officer returned to normal.

Next day we set off by train to Budapest, but, coal being unobtainable, the engine ran on wood, and in consequence speed was slow and the journey exceedingly tedious. It was not till after midnight that we rolled into Budapest Station. Here we were met by the Hungarian liaison officer, one Colonel Dormandie, who possessed all that charm and suavity for which his nation is renowned.

At his touch, everything went like magic. He

insisted on my getting into a car with him and driving off without the luggage, other cars being provided for this and for the staff. He took me to the Duna Palota Hotel, where comfortable quarters had been provided.

It was not until after he had bidden us good-night that I discovered that a small attaché case was missing from my luggage. Harris was quite sure he had seen it put into a car with the rest, but the Hungarians had so arranged matters that he himself and the other officers came on in a third car. Consequently, only the Hungarian driver was guarding the luggage between the station and the hotel. Knowing that the attaché case would be the first thing a spy would go for, I had taken care to use it only for tobacco, personal effects and suchlike rubbish, and to keep it always locked. The Hungarian spies had fallen neatly into my trap.

It was too late then to make a fuss, but next morning, when Captain Groidl of the Hungarian Army, and Commander Malenotte, of the Hungarian Navy, came to report themselves as attached to me, I made a formal complaint, and immediate inquiries were promised. Two days later the case was returned. It had been cut open with a knife, and the contents ransacked, then hurriedly thrown back.

The official explanation offered bears the smack of truth. It appeared that there was in the railway station a canteen kept open till after the last night train, where soldiers could get hot drinks, and here a Hungarian lady was on duty during

the night. A soldier had come in with a brown paper parcel, and asked her to look after it for a few minutes. She waited some time, but as he did not return she decided to close the canteen and go home, taking the parcel with her. Later she opened it, and, unable to make head or tail of it, sent it to the Chief of Police. It was my attaché case.

It was a timely commentary on the methods we might expect. A secret service agent must have jumped into the car which had contained the luggage, and made off with what he thought the likeliest piece. Disappointed, he had disposed of it in the neat way I have described.

I soon discovered that all my movements were being shadowed by three sets of spies, working apparently for independent organizations. One of these was certainly the Communist party; a second, in all probability, that of the Young Royalists anxious to restore the monarchy; and the third may have belonged to the *de facto* Government. Fortunately, I had brought up four blue-jackets to act as orderlies, and these were put on continuous sentry duty outside my room.

At nine o'clock that morning, Budapest was stirred by seeing the White Ensign flying from the flagstaff over the door of its principal hotel, the first time for four years a British flag had been seen there.

An early duty was to present myself to the head of the State, Count Karolyi, and acquaint him with my mission. He received me in a vast palace, in the last of a long series of empty rooms. He was

a tall, thin, stooping man, with eyes that did not look at you, and a twisted mouth, and he spoke with a marked impediment. But his English was good.

Karolyi came of a noble family. He had run through a big fortune in gambling, and was socialistically inclined. At the beginning of the War he was in France, and was interned, but was subsequently released because, so I understood, his sympathies were so much on our side that it was thought his influence would be valuable in his own country. So, at least, he told me later. On this occasion, he confined himself to languidly expressing a hope that I should find all the facilities I required, and asking me which armistice Colonel Vix's mission was dealing with—the Austro-Hungarian or the Hungarian. My impression was of a puzzled man trying to make a show of competence in a situation which he had not the faintest idea how to deal with. The answer to his question, given after consulting Colonel Vix, was, "Both."

Work really started with a conference with the Hungarian Board of Admiralty. I found this to consist of Captain Wulf, of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, and three or four junior officers. When Hungary had broken away it had been necessary to create some naval head, for the Danube naval forces were not inconsiderable. Wulf had been chosen as a man who had spent the whole War in monitors on the Danube.

After formal bows, we sat at a conference table, and the cession of the monitors was discussed.

Wulf informed me, with what I am sure was feigned regret, that there had been trouble in the Danube flotilla, that the crews had mutinied, and that Bolsheviki had sabotaged the engines so that not one of them was able to steam. On my asking whether the damage could not be repaired, he said he feared not. Their dockyard was disorganized, all work had stopped, and he was sure no one could be got to do it, even if material were available.

He then added that there were, in any case, only five monitors which could float, the sixth having struck a mine recently and having a large hole in her bottom. Finally, he told me that at this time of the year, and right through the winter, the upper reaches of the Danube between Budapest and Belgrade were too shallow for the monitors! At the moment, he admitted, there was just enough water to get them down the river, but the river was falling, and in a day or two would be too shallow! In a normal year it would already have been so, but this year was exceptional. Thus, while he was anxious to fulfil the terms of the Armistice, he feared there were grave difficulties.

There were indeed! Convinced that Wulf was an obstructionist who would do all he could to oppose me, I broke up the conference. I felt sure the Hungarians meant to play their disorganization as an excuse for doing nothing, and that I should meet with nothing but procrastination and delay, and I decided the best course was to take the ships myself instead of waiting for the enemy to fulfil their promise.

Next, I received a call from Mr. Zercovitz, an official of the Danube Navigation Company, who had been created Minister of Shipping by the Government, to arrange the transfer of the steamers, tugs and lighters. He placed a luxurious office at my disposal, and had already prepared a list of the ships which he thought might suitably be surrendered! There was only one difficulty, he said, namely that no crews could be got to take them down to Belgrade, since they would not risk themselves in the enemy's country.

It was clear to me that Mr. Zercovitz, polite and deferential as he was, hoped to get me to accept the smallest, the oldest and the least valuable steamers on the river. The terms of the Armistice did not specify their size, so I decided to take a mixed selection, which would admit of a Serbian service being started which could work on the upper, middle and lower Danube. Demanding a complete list of all vessels on the river, with their localities, I made my staff visit and report on each one, and was thus in a position to select a suitable list.

Similarly, the monitors all had to be inspected, and I found Wulf was correct in one respect. There were only five boats fit to go down, as the sixth was in dock with a hole in her bottom through which you could drive a coach and four. Contrary to Wulf's prophecies, however, the river held its level, even rising somewhat, so that there was still time to think out a means of getting the monitors down. The sixth monitor clearly could not

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go for months, while of the remaining five, three were modern and oil-burning, the other two old, small and coal-burners.

Besides the monitors, the Hungarians possessed a number of what they called patrol boats, fast, shallow-draught vessels with a light armament, which were to the monitors very much what a cruiser is to a battleship. Indeed, a river monitor resembles nothing more closely than a miniature battleship, and on the river it seems to acquire the status and importance of one.

There was a seventh monitor, the *Bodrog*, which, having run aground below Belgrade, was already in the hands of the Allies. My idea was to provide the Allies in general, and Serbia in particular, with a fleet which would enable them to dominate the Danube, and quickly to crush any belated resistance which might rear itself from out the chaos of the conquered nations.

The large monitors could not work in the upper Danube. They drew too much water, and my choice must therefore contain patrol boats. A good deal of correspondence then ensued with Admiral Troubridge as to the best composition of the new fleet.

Finally it was decided to demand the five large minitors which were available, and to substitute two patrol boats for the sixth. The Hungarians objected that we were taking seven vessels instead of six, but I insisted that their military value was no greater than that of the force originally conceded, and they submitted under protest.

While these negotiations proceeded, there was plenty to do picking out the other craft to be ceded.

The tugs were the salvation of the business, for, if necessary, they could tow not only the lighters, but also the monitors.

Very soon, in batches of half-a-dozen or so, the lighters were slipping down the river.

The crews of the passenger steamers were very shy of the journey. The Hungarians had to promise them double pay, whilst I guaranteed safe conduct back to Hungary, and even then it was difficult to get them to take the ships down.

The Belgrade newspapers provided a running commentary on the business. When a big or modern steamer was ceded, they took that as a matter of course, but when it was the turn of a small one their outcries were bitter. They were being cheated, I was being fooled, and the Jugo-Slav naval officer on my staff was in Hungarian pay!

Meanwhile, the river had begun to fall, and the day came when Captain Wulf informed me it was no longer possible to get the monitors down. No doubt he thought he had triumphed, but I was determined to have them down, even if we had to lighten them by taking every gun out to do it, and I asked urgently for the Naval Brigade to be sent up ready for eventualities.

A few days later, quite suddenly, all the difficulties disappeared. The Admiral sent me the Naval Brigade, having arranged matters satisfactorily

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with General Franchet d'Esperey. After all, sailors were not troops in the strict sense of the word, so that the *fiat* of the Allied Council was not being flouted. The river, too, to everybody's surprise, began to rise again.

The local newspapers were fulsome in their comments on the affair. They wrote of the sailors:—

What struck us most in the case of the sailors was their equipment. It seemed to us almost fabulous. Superb cloth, magnificent leather leggings, laced boots reaching to the knees, first-class straps and belts with brass fittings, woollen stockings and gloves, sheepskin rugs, waterproof coats, and provisions of such quality and quantity that seemed to us like a glimpse of the Arabian Nights. No wonder the good fellows were all in such high spirits, their only regret being that their sojourn in Budapest was so short.

This was flattery, combined with a sort of lip-licking, on seeing such a profusion of the good things of which they had so long been deprived. They went on:—

There can be no doubt that by the time the men and officers disperse to their homes, in the capital, we shall find ourselves once more possessed by that Anglo-mania, which was temporarily set in abeyance by the murderous carnage of a struggle that snapped the threads of so many cordial friendships.

As we are writing these lines, the monitors are far away from the confines of the capital—far away in the distance these instruments of imperialism and the war craze which have devoured so many millions. We do not deplore their loss. On our Danube, that

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mighty waterway of international trade, we would in the future see only the peaceful boats of honest, non-combatant commerce.

Everything was now plain sailing. British crews were allotted to each monitor, and one by one the tugs towed them down the river. When the last tug, the last lighter, the last passenger steamer and the last monitor had slipped silently away, my task was at an end. But this had taken till well on in January, and a good deal else had happened.

From the first day of my arrival, I was inundated with callers, and they all wanted something. A British representative was, in their minds, a natural channel to the seat of power, and a target for every kind of importunity. In vain I assured them that I was dealing solely with the Armistice. Nothing would keep them away. One frequent request was to be given a passage, or permitted to take one, to Turkey, or Asia Minor, or in fact anywhere. There were hundreds of people only too anxious to get out of the country. My instructions in this matter were to give passages only to British subjects, and the ingenious subterfuges that were tried to get round this were amusing. One obvious Jew, for instance, desired a passage to Jerusalem. I told him that this was only permitted to Allied nationals.

"Oh," he said, "but I am a British subject." Asked on what he based this claim, his reply was that he had been born in Jerusalem, and since that city had been captured by General Allenby it was

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now British, and therefore he was British. Neat certainly, but not quite good enough!

Another group of callers consisted of British or American ladies who, having married Hungarians, could not get out of the country. I helped them when I could.

Admiral Horthy, who has since become Regent of Hungary, came to call, beautifully arrayed in morning coat. He had known many of our officers intimately before the War, and was a fine naval officer. He told me he was now in retirement on his estate in the country, and that he did not think of serving again. He little knew at that time of the high destiny that was to be forced upon him.

Another caller was Mr. Yexley,¹ who informed me he was about to leave for England to convey a formal offer of the Throne of Hungary to Prince Arthur of Connaught. I do not think he ever really did so. The talk of a British prince for the Throne of Hungary was continuous among a certain set, but I doubt if it carried any real weight.

I cannot recall a quarter of the amusing people who came. One, I remember, was an ardent, pale-faced student, who purported to represent the Royalist party, and had some plot for seizing power in which he implored my help. It was certainly an amusing time, and there was no lack of variety.

Every afternoon and evening a *tzigane* orchestra played in the lounge, and the hotel was crowded. People flocked in to see the British. Here I was introduced to the President's wife, Countess Karo-

¹ Mr. Yexley was a well-known British resident of Hungary.

lyi, by an interned English officer. Perhaps this approach was the beginning of an artful political manœuvre. At all events, a day or two later, an officer came from the President requesting me to meet him at the house of a certain Baron X. I went, and found there Count Karolyi, Baron X, and another member of the Government.

Hospitality having been offered and declined, the President began to tell me how mistaken the Allies were in their treatment of Hungary, and that it would be impossible for him to carry on his Government if this harshness continued. The alternative, he said, would be Bolshevism.

It was indeed true that in discussion at Paris, of which Budapest seemed to have full reports, Hungary had already been whittled down in prospect to one-sixth of its former size. Every night in a busy street outside a prominent newspaper office, a brilliantly lit map appeared showing Hungary as it had been, and Hungary as it was now was, with large slices carved off and given to Serbia, Roumania, Czecho-Slovakia and Austria.

It did look as if the Hungarians were being hardly treated, but it was no affair of mine. As Karolyi continued, his statements became more and more surprising. He told me that he had always been on our side. In fact, he said, it was because he had undertaken to help us that he had been released from internment in France, where before the War he had been working for an entente with his country. Now he actually claimed that the Austrian *débâcle* had been brought about by

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his assistance, and when I asked him how he had managed this, he hinted that he had worked to corrupt the troops so that they would not fight against the Italians. Instead of recognizing this, the Allies were dismembering Hungary, and Bolshevism, the very thing they wished to avoid, the mad wolf which was sniffing hungrily at the threshold, would come into power and destroy Europe.

Hungary had broken away from Austria, and now she claimed the Allies' protection. If only he could meet some English statesman, Mr. Balfour, any one! He would meet him where he liked, in Holland for example. Then he was sure he would be able to explain Hungary's real position and put matters right. Would I convey his request?

I reminded the President that we were in a condition of Armistice, and that negotiations between the combatants could properly only take place across the line and between the military commanders. The President, nodding sadly, said he appreciated this, but he particularly wished that this matter should not be in the hands of the French, and it was as a combatant that he addressed himself to me.

It seemed to me highly improper that at such a time I should connive at bringing about a secret interview between the President of Hungary and Mr. Balfour, and I refused, but offered to ask Admiral Troubridge, my superior, if he would meet Count Karolyi. With this the President expressed himself content, and the meeting broke up.

I prepared my despatch, and sent it as usual by one of Colonel Vix's regular couriers.

Each day an officer came from the President to know if there was any reply. Always there was none. At the week-end, as the President was going out of town, he took care to leave an A.D.C. to bring out the answer when it came. But silence continued, and, on making telephonic inquiries, I learned that the dispatch had never been received. Following up the inquiry with Colonel Vix, who was at first at a loss, the explanation suddenly dawned on him. On that particular afternoon, his courier had had his despatch cut off his back in Budapest Station! Perhaps forgetting that he was carrying British letters as well as French, the Colonel had omitted to inform me. I did not know which was the worse crime—to allow the despatches to be stolen or not to inform an ally of the theft! It sounded an odd story, but I could think of no credible alternative. At all events, there was nothing for it but to send a duplicate despatch, this time by one of my own officers.

Once Admiral Troubridge had learnt what was afoot, it did not take him long to decide. The nefariousness of secret negotiations at such a time must have looked doubly glaring to him from the more distant viewpoint of one outside the country. He returned an uncompromising "No," and so Karolyi never got his interview. His last hope of saving Hungary from dismemberment and Bolshevism had gone.

The threat of Bolshevism was no idle one. Bela

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Kuhn, the Bolshevik leader, was in Budapest, with a strong party behind him. Soldiers and sailors were openly Communist, and practised Communistic principles, as they understood them, at every convenient opportunity. People avoided Hungarian soldiers in uniform like the plague. For instance, a lady was walking along with a dog on a lead, and a soldier came up from behind. Seizing the lead, he remarked, "I want that dog."

"Oh, but you can't have it," said the lady, "it's mine."

"Yes, yes," said the soldier, "I'm a Communist, so it's mine, too," and then proceeded to divest the lady also of her ear-rings, justifying himself on the same humane principles.

A similar attempt was made on Lieutenant Groidl, the officer attached to me.

"I want that coat," said the man, coming swiftly up to him on a dark road. Groidl had a revolver, however, and fired without a moment's hesitation. The man ran, shot through the arm.

We had an elaborate organization for evacuating British residents in the event of a Communist rising and a threatened massacre, for in this land of pogroms, massacres were nothing out of the way. The Dutch Minister was diplomatically responsible for British interests, and I concerted my plans with him. The British residents, of whom he had a list, would be notified to assemble at the Duna Palota, which, with my sailors, I could defend for a time, and as the Hotel backed on to the river it would be possible to evacuate them from there by a passenger

steamer, which we kept manned by British seamen. Fortunately, the occasion did not arise whilst I was at Budapest, but it nearly did.

One morning early, while I was still in bed, I had a ring on the telephone. It was a message from the President to say that the Government could not last any longer, and that he was going to resign that afternoon. This would mean the Bolsheviks would assume power. The message was sent unofficially through a third party.

I replied that the President must do as he wished, but that I saw no reason why, with a little show of strength and force, he should not maintain his Government. In fact, I thought he ought to "hang on."

Back came a reply from the President, to say that in view of my words he had decided to take a gambler's chance and hold on.

I breathed again. No one wanted the Bolsheviks in power. My unofficial advice proved right, and it was not for another month or more, when incidentally I had left Budapest and returned to England, that Bela Kun stepped into power, and Karolyi fled for his life.

While I was preparing to return to Belgrade, news came from the Admiralty that I had been appointed Assistant Director of Naval Ordnance, and that Captain Haggard was on his way to England, that Bela Kun stepped into power, and therefore, to find that Haggard was already there. He told me the Admiralty had completely lost me. They had intended me to come home to take up

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this Admiralty appointment when they sent Captain Adams to the *Latona* in October. Weeks had gone by, and as I did not turn up they had started telegraphing inquiries. At last I was located, but could not be spared from my present duty without a relief, so they pitched on Haggard and sent him out. All this had taken time.

I smiled. I had been luckier than I knew. Had the Admiralty informed me of my new appointment when they sent my relief to the *Latona*, I could not have gone off to Salonika. Their omission to do so had given me a unique experience.

Nothing remained but to say good-bye, and, on paying a farewell call on H.R.H. the Crown Prince (subsequently King Alexander), he was pleased to bestow on Harris and myself the Order of the White Eagle with Crossed Swords. It is pleasant to think that the monitors I sent down became the Jugo-Slav fleet on the Danube, and remain so to this day.

Harris and I, and two orderlies, returned home through Hungary, Austria and Switzerland, and were thus able to say a last good-bye to Budapest, of which we had grown fond.

Poor Hungary! Her troubles had only begun, for it was when Bela Kuhn came into power a month later that things really became unpleasant. Murders and robberies were rife, and there was little or nothing to eat.

Colonel Dormandie, the exquisite aristocrat who had always declared he would fight Bolshevism

with his last drop of blood, was compelled to act as interpreter for the Bolsheviks, and on one occasion, when carrying on some negotiation with Allied officers across the lines, was suspected of using the opportunity to make secret communications of his own. They sentenced him to death, and one morning two soldiers set out to march him to the place of execution. It was a long walk, and after all, thought the soldiers, why should they put themselves to this unnecessary trouble? Why go all that way to do something they could do just as well where they were? Lagging behind a few steps, they clubbed him over the head with the butts of their rifles. Dormandie fell, and they left him for dead. He was not dead, however, and was found and taken to hospital. By the time he recovered, Bela Kuhn's *régime* had been swept away. His assassins had saved his life.

London at last, and the dreary resumption of drab peace duties, just as if there had been no war. Admiralty departments working like mad to improve gunnery and ship construction, now that everything was over! No one saw anything funny about it!

In the Club I met Captain Stephenson, who had been anxiously scanning available records to find out how many submarines his barrage had in fact put down. I was able to tell him, from what I had heard in Hungary, that the German submarine officers were terrified of it, and credited it with a number of losses. Whatever the figures, it

had undoubtedly played its part in winning the War.

We looked back on those days of strenuous endeavour, so full of hope, so disappointing in achievement. We realized they had served their purpose in contributing to the remorseless pressure which had bled Germany white.

"He blew with his winds, and they were scattered." Thus the Deity! But for England it had not been so easy. We saw clearly how her supremacy in battleships had been the dominant factor in the whole campaign. How right the people had been when, in 1911, they clamoured, "We want eight, and we won't wait." Thank Heaven they got their eight.

Command of the sea was the keystone of the arch, but it was not everything. Like a shattering blast had come the German mine campaign, surprising everybody by its intensity and power. England hesitated, then uttered her counterblast in the paravane and in innumerable minesweepers. Germany gathered her forces and struck again. This time it was the submarine, and the unrestricted sinking of merchant shipping, and England was driven, tottering, to the very brink of the abyss. Here she held the attack, and, drawing strength from all her sons, from scientist and fisherman alike, she martialled her reply—the depth charge, the hydrophone, airships, Q-ships, mines, nets, convoy—under the shadow of 'Command of the Sea' these prevailed, and Germany collapsed.

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The Navy had indeed proved the country's 'sure shield'. It had made many mistakes. All its weaknesses had been exposed, and there had been times when it was beaten almost to its knees, and the feet of the great had quaked in their shoes.

England had then been in direst peril! But British tenacity had held. With superb courage and unlimited contrivance, it had tackled its many problems and beaten them all. England was safe again, and it was now the turn of statesmen to make of it 'a country fit for heroes to live in.'

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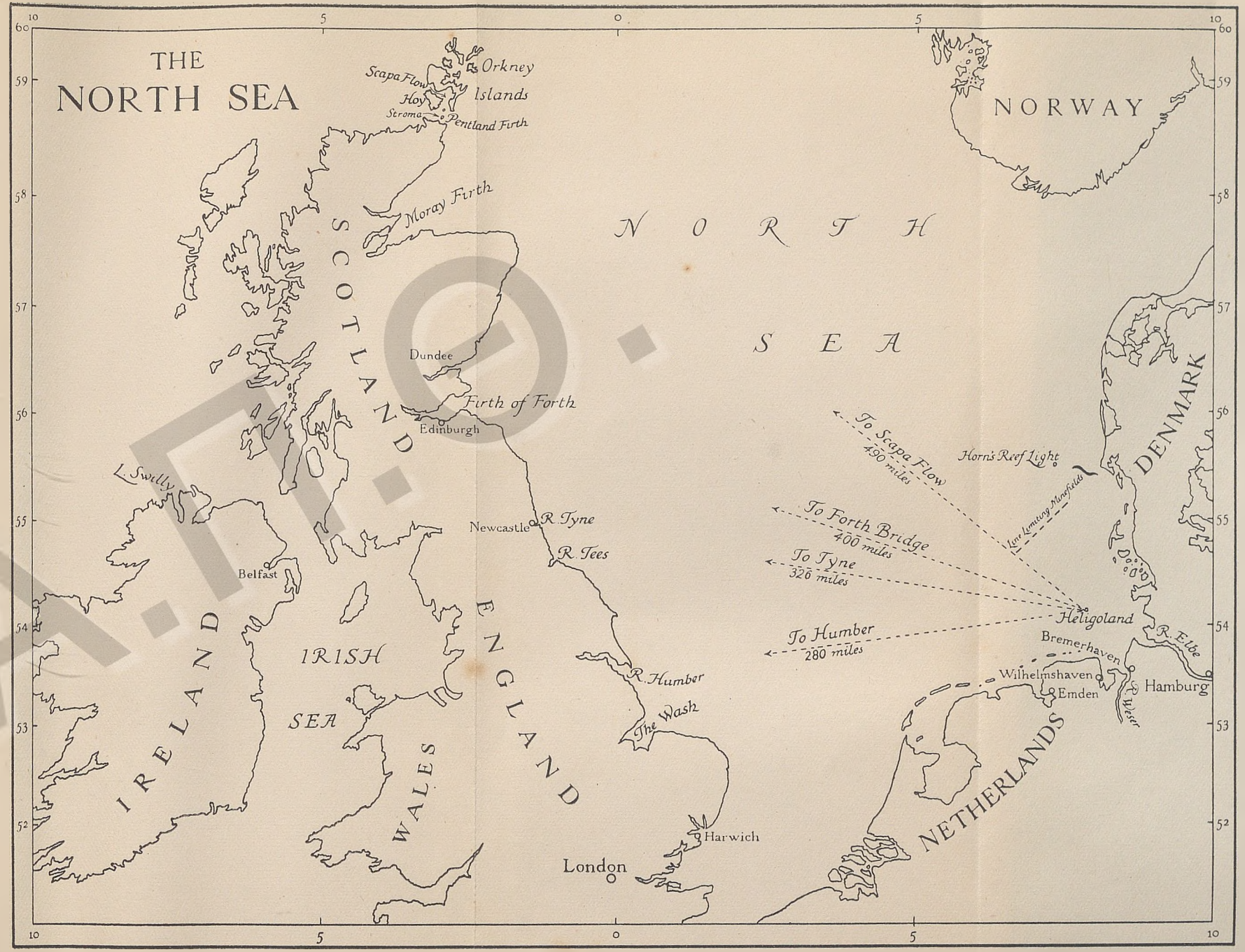
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